

THE PHILADELPHIA
CONFESSION

1742

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The 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

*Thirty-Two Articles of Christian Faith and Practice with Scripture Proofs
Adopted by the Ministers and Messengers of the General Assembly Which
Met in London in 1689*

To the Judicious and Impartial Reader

Courteous Reader,

It is now many years since divers of us (with other sober Christians then living and walking in the way of the Lord that we professe) did conceive our selves to be under a necessity of Publishing a *Confession of our Faith*, for the information, and satisfaction of those, that did not thoroughly understand what our principles were, or had entertained prejudices against our Profession, by reason of the strange representation of them, by some men of note, who had taken very wrong measures, and accordingly led others into misapprehensions, of us, and them: and this was first put forth about the year, 1643, in the name of seven Congregations then gathered in *London*; since which time, diverse impressions thereof have been dispersed abroad, and our end proposed, in good measure answered, inasmuch as many (and some of those men eminent, both for piety and learning) were thereby satisfied, that we were no way guilty of those Heterodoxies and fundamental errors, which had too frequently been charged upon us without ground, or occasion given on our part. And forasmuch, as that Confession is not now commonly to be had; and also that many others have since embraced the same truth which is owned therein; it was judged necessary by us to joyn together in giving a testimony to the world; of our firm adhering to those wholesome Principles, by the publication of this which is now in your hand.

And forasmuch as our method, and manner of expressing our sentiments, in this, doth vary from the former (although the substance of the matter is the same) we shall freely impart to you the reason and occasion thereof. One thing that greatly prevailed with us to undertake this work, was (not only to give a full account of our selves, to those Christians that differ from us about the subject of Baptism, but also) the profit that might from thence arise, unto those that have any account of our labors, in their instruction, and establishment in the great truths of the Gospel; in the clear understanding, and steady belief of which, our comfortable walking with God, and fruitfulness before him, in all our ways, is most neerly concerned; and therefore we did conclude

it necessary to expresse our selves the more fully, and distinctly; and also to fix on such a method as might be most comprehensive of those things which we designed to explain our sense, and belief of; and finding no defect, in this regard, in that fixed on by the assembly, and after them by those of the Congregational way, we did readily conclude it best to retain the same order in our present confession: and also, when we observed that those last mentioned, did in their confession (for reasons which seemed of weight both to themselves and others) choose not only to express their mind in words concurrent with the former in sense, concerning all those articles wherein they were agreed, but also for the most part without any variation of the terms we did in like manner conclude it best to follow their example in making use of the very same words with them both, in these articles (which are very many) wherein our faith and doctrine is the same with theirs, and this we did, the more abundantly, to manifest our consent with both, in all the fundamental articles of the Christian Religion, as also with many others, whose orthodox confessions have been published to the world; on behalf of the Protestants in divers Nations and Cities: and also to convince all, that we have no itch to clogge Religion with new words, but do readily acquiesce in that form of sound words, which hath been, in consent with the holy Scriptures, used by others before us; hereby declaring before God, Angels, & Men, our hearty agreement with them, in that wholesome Protestant Doctrine, which with so clear evidence of Scriptures they have asserted: some things indeed, are in some places added, some terms omitted, and some few changed, but these alterations are of that nature, as that we need not doubt, any charge or suspition of unsoundness in the faith, from any of our brethren upon the account of them.

In those things wherein we differ from others, we have exprest our selves with all candor and plainness that none might entertain jealousie of ought secretly lodged in our breasts, that we would not the world should be acquainted with; yet we hope we have also observed those rules of modesty, and humility, as will render our freedom in this respect inoffensive, even to those whose sentiments are different from ours.

We have also taken care to affix texts of Scripture, in the margin for the confirmation of each article in our confession; in which work we have studiously indeavoured to select such as are most clear and pertinent, for the proof of what is asserted by us: and our earnest desire is, that all into whose

hands this may come, would follow that (never enough commended) example of the noble Bereans, who searched the Scriptures daily, that they might find out whether the things preached to them were so or not.

There is one thing more which we sincerely professe, and earnestly desire credence in, viz. That contention is most remote from our design in all that we have done in this matter: and we hope the liberty of an ingenuous unfolding our principles, and opening our hearts unto our Brethren, with the Scripture grounds on which our faith and practise leanes, will by none of them be either denyed to us, or taken ill from us. Our whole design is accomplished, if we may obtain that Justice, as to be measured in our principles, and practise, and the judgement of both by others, according to what we have now published; which the Lord (whose eyes are as a flame of fire) knoweth to be the doctrine, which with our hearts we must firmly believe, and sincerely indeavour to conform our lives to. And oh that other contentions being laid asleep, the only care and contention of all upon whom the name of our blessed Redeemer is called, might for the future be, to walk humbly with their God, and in the exercise of all Love and Meekness towards each other, to perfect holyness in the fear of the Lord, each one endeavouring to have his conversation such as becometh the Gospel; and also suitable to his place and capacity vigorously to promote in others the practice of true Religion and undefiled in the sight of God and our Father. And that in this backsliding day, we might not spend our breath in fruitless complaints of the evils of others; but may every one begin at home, to reform in the first place our own hearts, and wayes; and then to quicken all that we may have influence upon, to the same work; that if the will of God were so, none might deceive themselves, by resting in, and trusting to, a form of Godliness, without the power of it, and inward experience of the efficacy of those truths that are professed by them.

And verily there is one spring and cause of the decay of Religion in our day, which we cannot but touch upon, and earnestly urge a redresse of; and that is the neglect of the worship of God in Families, by those to whom the charge and conduct of them is committed. May not the grosse ignorance, and instability of many; with the prophaneness of others, be justly charged upon their Parents and Masters; who have not trained them up in the way wherein they ought to walk when they were young? but have neglected those frequent and solemn commands which the Lord hath laid upon them so to catechize,

and instruct them, that their tender years might be seasoned with the knowledge of the truth of God as revealed in the Scriptures; and also by their own omission of Prayer, and other duties of Religion in their families, together with the ill example of their loose conversation, have inured them first to a neglect, and then contempt of all Piety and Religion? we know this will not excuse the blindness, or wickedness of any; but certainly it will fall heavy upon those that have thus been the occasion thereof; they indeed dye in their sins; but will not their blood be required of those under whose care they were, who yet permitted them to go on without warning, yea led them into the paths of destruction? and will not the diligence of Christians with respect to the discharge of these duties, in ages past, rise up in judgment against, and condemn many of those who would be esteemed such now?

We shall conclude with our earnest prayer, that the God of all grace, will pour out those measures of his holy Spirit upon us, that the profession of truth may be accompanied with the sound belief, and diligent practise of it by us; that his name may in all things be glorified, through Jesus Christ our Lord, *Amen*.

THE PHILADELPHIA CONFESSION

Chapter I

Of the Holy Scriptures

1. The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible (*a*) rule of all saving Knowledge, Faith and Obedience; Although the (*b*) light of Nature, and the works of Creation and Providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom and power of God, as to leave men unexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and His will, which is necessary unto Salvation. (*c*) Therefore it pleased the Lord at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal himself, and to declare that His will unto his Church; and afterward for the better preserving, and propagating of the Truth, and for the more sure Establishment, and Comfort of the Church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan, and of the World, to commit the same wholly unto (*d*) writing; which maketh the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary, those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.

(*a*) 2Ti. 3:15-17; Isa. 20:1; Luk. 16:29-31; Eph. 2:20 (*b*) Rom. 1:19-21; Rom. 2:14-15; Psa. 19:1-3 (*c*) Heb. 1:1 (*d*) Pro. 22:19-21; Rom. 15:4; 2Pe. 1:19-20

2. Under the Name of Holy Scripture or the Word of God written; are now contained all the Books of the Old and New Testament which are these,

Of the Old Testament

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Songs, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

Of the New Testament

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, The Acts of the Apostles, Paul's Epistle to the Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Phillippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, to Titus, to Philemon, the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Epistle of James, The first and

second Epistles of Peter, The first, second and third Epistles of John, the Epistle of Jude, the Revelation. All which are given by the *(e)* inspiration of God, to be the rule of Faith and Life.

(e) 2Ti. 3:16

3. The Books commonly called Apocrypha not being of *(f)* Divine inspiration, are no part of the Canon (or rule) of the Scripture, and therefore are of no authority to the Church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved or made use of, then other humane writings.

(f) Luk. 24:27; Luk. 24:44; Rom. 3:2

4. The Authority of the Holy Scripture for which it ought to be believed dependeth not upon the testimony of any man, or Church; but wholly upon *(g)* God (who is truth it self) the Author thereof; therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.

(g) 2Pe. 1:19-21; 2Ti. 3:16; 2Th. 2:13; 1Jo. 5:9

5. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church of God, to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scriptures; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the Doctrine, and the Majesty of the stile, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God) the full discovery it makes of the only way of mans salvation, and many other incomparable Excellencies, and intire perfections thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence it self to be the Word of God; yet notwithstanding; our *(h)* full perswasion, and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our Hearts.

(h) Joh. 16:13-14; 1Cor. 2:10-12; 1Jn. 2:2; 1Jn. 2:20; 1Jn. 2:27

6. The whole Councel of God concerning all things *(i)* necessary for his own Glory, Mans Salvation, Faith and Life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture; unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new Revelation of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless we acknowledge the *(k)* inward illumination of the Spirit of God, to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word, and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church common to humane actions and societies; which are to be *(l)* ordered by the light of nature, and Christian

prudence according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.

(*i*) 2Ti. 3:15-17; Gal. 1:8-9. (*k*) Joh. 6:45; 1Cor. 2:9-12. (*l*) 1Cor. 11:13-14; 1Cor. 14:26; 1Cor. 14:40.

7. All things in Scripture are not alike (*m*) plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for Salvation, are so (*n*) clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of ordinary means, may attain to a sufficient understanding of them.

(*m*) 2Pe. 3:16 (*n*) Psa. 19:7 and Psa. 119:130.

8. The Old Testament in (*o*) Hebrew, (which was the Native language of the people of God of old) and the New Testament in Greek (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the Nations being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and Providence kept pure in all Ages, are therefore (*p*) authentic; so as in all controversies of Religion the Church is finally to appeal unto them (*q*) But because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have a right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded in the fear of God to read (*r*) and search them, therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every Nation, unto which they (*s*) come, that the Word of God dwelling (*t*) plentifully in all, they may worship him in an acceptable manner, and through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have hope.

(*o*) Rom. 3:2. (*p*) Isa. 8:20. (*q*) Act. 15:15. (*r*) Joh. 5:39. (*s*) 1Cor. 14:6; 1Cor. 14:9; 1Cor. 14:11-12; 1Cor. 14:24; 1Cor. 14:28. (*t*) Col. 3:16.

9. The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the (*u*) Scripture it self: And therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold but one) it must be searched by other places that speak more clearly.

(*u*) 2Pe. 1:20-21; Act. 15:15-16.

10. The supream judge by which all controversies of Religion are to be determined, and all Decrees of Councils, opinions of antient Writers, Doctrines of men, and private Spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by

the Spirit, into which (x) Scripture so delivered, our faith is finally resolved.

(x) Mat. 22:29; Mat. 22:31; Eph. 2:20; Act. 28:23.

CIRCULAR LETTER

"The Holy Scriptures"

By Abel Morgan, Pastor
Middletown Baptist Church

May, 1774

The Association of elders and messengers of the several Baptist congregations in Pennsylvania, and the neighboring colonies, met at New York, May 25th, 1774.

Send our Christian salutation.

Beloved Brethren, -- Whereas, unity in judgment (Ephesians iv. 12, 13; 1 Corinthians i. 10), and growth in every grace (Ephesians iv. 15; 1 Thessalonians iv. 9. 10), are the two principal ends of all ministerial means and institutions; whatever, therefore, directly or natively tends to promote those valuable purposes, is hereby manifested to be good and right. The meeting of churches by their messengers at stated seasons, is esteemed to have this useful tendency. Such meetings ought then, not only to be continued, but also improved to the utmost for obtaining those desirable aforesaid designs. And that they may be more so, it is thought expedient, that henceforth the contents of the general letters to the churches consist of an improvement of some article of our Confession of faith, following the order therein observed, unless some particular requires otherwise, beginning with the first, viz., Of the Holy Scriptures; which are contained in the books of the Old and New Testament, as in our said adopted Confession. -- These holy writings are of God, divinely inspired, 2 Timothy iii. 16; the word of God, John x. 36; 1 Corinthians xiv. 36, 37; the mind of Christ, 1 Corinthians ii. 26; of Divine authority, Isaiah xl. 8; the infallible ground of faith and certain rule of obedience, Isaiah viii. 20; full and complete in all its parts, historical, doctrinal, and prophetical; every way useful and profitable: e. gr. to obtain the saving knowledge of the one only living and true God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, 2 Timothy iii. 15; the knowledge of his essential attributes and immutable counsels, Hebrews vi. 17; also of his works, of creation, providence, and particularly of redemption by Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, the one Mediator, God-Man. In the Scriptures we are clearly informed of the offices which he executes; of his unparalleled condescension and glorious exaltation, his approbation with the Father; and of his grace, love,

merits, titles, and benefits.

The Scriptures are likewise useful, to give us the knowledge of man's ruin by sin; his misery, guilt, and condemnation; the consequences of his transgression; of the ever wonderful way of recovery by Christ, together with the certain characters of those who are restored; the change produced in them, and their obligations to new obedience; the blessedness of the godly, and the misery of the wicked and unbelievers; and also, the final state of both, after this life. Hence, be exhorted, brethren, to consider what a special privilege God has granted you, and continued with you. The Bible in your hands! Let this word of God dwell richly in your hearts also, in its doctrines, promises, commands, cautions, and threatenings; for your enlightening, your acting of every grace, your avoiding every sin, and for your perfecting holiness in the fear of God, 2 Corinthians vii. 1. Some are forbid the use of the Bible, others are taught and persuaded to slight the Scriptures, while others again corrupt the word of God, 2 Corinthians ii. 17. All those come short of receiving the full benefit thereof. Beware ye, dear brethren, lest your adversary, the devil, render it useless to you, by your neglecting of it. Frequently read the Scriptures in your retirements, read them in your families; make conscience of giving opportunities to all your households, of hearing what God says of them and to them. Speak of God's word, meditate upon it, and according to it, Psalm 1. 2, 3. Especially, look that you have an experimental acquaintance with the operation of Divine truth upon your hearts, 1 Thessalonians ii. 13. Pray God for a blessing to accompany it wherever it is preached; and always admire God, and praise him for his special kindness in giving you the holy Bible.

SAMUEL JONES, Moderator,

WILLIAM ROGERS, Clerk.

Chapter II

Of God and Of the Holy Trinity

1. The Lord our God is but *(a)* one only living, and true God; whose *(b)* subsistence is in and of himself, *(c)* infinite in being, and perfection, whose Essence cannot be comprehended by any but himself; *(d)* a most pure spirit, *(e)* invisible, without body, parts, or passions, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light, which no man can approach unto, who is *(f)* immutable, *(g)* immense, *(h)* eternal, incomprehensible, *(i)* Almighty, every way infinit, *(k)* most holy, most wise, most free, most absolute, *(l)* working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable, and most righteous will, *(m)* for his own glory, most loving, gracious, merciful, long suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, *(n)* the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and withall most just, *(o)* and terrible in his judgements, *(p)* hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the *(q)* guilty.

(a) 1Cor. 8:4; 1Cor. 8:6; Deu. 6:4. *(b)* Jer. 10:10; Isa. 48:12. *(c)* Exo. 3:14. *(d)* Joh. 4:24. *(e)* 1Ti. 1:17; Deu. 4:15-16. *(f)* Mal. 3:6. *(g)* 1Ki. 8:27; Jer. 23:23. *(h)* Psal. 90:2. *(i)* Gen. 17:1. *(k)* Isa. 6:3. *(l)* Psal. 115:3; Isa. 46:10. *(m)* Pro. 16:4; Rom. 11:36. *(n)* Exo. 34:6-7; Heb. 11:6. *(o)* Neh. 9:32-33. *(p)* Psal. 5:5-6. *(q)* Exo. 34:7; Nah. 1:2-3.

2. God having all *(r)* life, *(s)* glory, *(t)* goodness, blessedness, in and of himself: is alone in, and unto himself all-sufficient, not *(u)* standing in need of any Creature which he hath made, nor deriving any glory from them, but onely manifesting his own glory in, by, unto, and upon them, he is the alone fountain of all Being, *(x)* of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things, and he hath most sovereign *(y)* dominion over all creatures, to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever himself pleaseth; in his sight *(z)* all things are open and manifest, his knowledge is *(a)* infinite, infallible, and independant upon the Creature, so as nothing is to him contingent, or uncertain; he is most holy in all his Counsels, in *(b)* all his Works, and in all his Commands; to him is due *(c)* from Angels and men, whatsoever worship, service, or obedience as Creatures they owe unto the Creator, and whatever he is further pleased to require of them.

(r) Joh. 5:26. *(s)* Psal. 148:13. *(t)* Psal. 119:68. *(u)* Job. 22:2-3. *(x)* Rom. 11:34-36. *(y)* Dan. 4:25; Dan. 4:34-35. *(z)* Heb. 4:13. *(a)* Eze.

11:5; Act. 15:18. *(b)* Psa. 145:17. *(c)* Rev. 5:12-14.

3. In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, *(d)* the Father the Word (or Son) and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and Eternity, each having the whole Divine Essence, *(e)* yet the Essence undivided, the Father is of none neither begotten nor proceeding, the Son is *(f)* Eternally begotten of the Father, the holy Spirit *(g)* proceeding from the Father and the Son, all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and Being; but distinguished by several peculiar, relative properties, and personal relations; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our Communion with God, and comfortable dependance on him.

(d) 1Jn. 5:7; Mat. 28:19; 2Cor. 13:14. *(e)* Exo. 3:14; Joh. 14:11; 1Cor. 8:6. *(f)* Joh. 1:14; Joh. 1:18. *(g)* Joh. 15:26; Gal. 4:6.

CIRCULAR LETTER

Philadelphia Baptist Association

"The Being and Perfections of God: The Trinity"

By Samuel Jones, Pastor

Pennepek Baptist Church

October, 1774

The Association of elders and brethren of the several Baptist churches in Pennsylvania and the colonies adjacent, held at Philadelphia, October 12th, 13th, and 14th, 1774.

Send our Christian salutation.

Beloved brethren, -- Agreeable to the plan adopted at our last Association, for the general letter to the churches, we come now to address you on the next article contained in our Confession of faith, which treats of the being and perfections of God, and includes the doctrine of the Trinity.

This is an important article; a foundation, a corner stone in the Christian faith. Remove this, and the whole superstructure will fall. Material then it is that we clearly conceive of, firmly believe, and without wavering, hold the same agreeable to the form of sound words, wherein it is held forth in divine revelation.

First, That there is an only living and true God, the supreme and eternal Jehovah, is manifest.

1. From the reason of things. Since there cannot be an effect without cause, there must be a first cause, self existent and independent.

2. From the works of creation, all marvellous and astonishing from the least to the greatest. As also,

3. From those of Providence, in sustaining and well ordering the whole universe, through all the successive periods of time. And especially,

4. From the consciousness of a Supreme Being impressed on every rational soul. Above all,

5. From the holy Scriptures. Deut. vi. 4; xxiii. 39; iv. 35; Psalm Ixxxvi.10; Isa. xlv. 5.

Secondly, The perfections of God may be easily deduced from the same sources, especially his wisdom, power, and goodness infinite. And though his

mercy, justice, truth, and holiness be not so clear from the works of creation and providence, yet there is a strong consciousness of these, as well as of his omniscience, omnipresence, &c., while they are also abundantly manifested by his word and Spirit.

Thirdly, Now, in this Divine and Infinite Being, there are three subsistences, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Father, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son, or Word, eternally begotten of the Father, John i. 14, 18; iii. 16; 1 John iv. 9; and the Holy Ghost proceeding from the Father and the Son, John v. 26, constituting, in the undivided essence of the Godhead, a trinity of persons, each of them possessed of all divine perfections, and every way co-equal, and these three are one, the One God. 1 John v. 7.

That there are three appears through all the sacred writings, in reference to the works of creation, providence and grace, 1 Pet. i. 2; in whose name baptism is administered, Matt. xxviii. 19; and to whom divine worship and adoration are addressed, 2 Cor. xiii. 14; and that these Three are One, or that there is One, and but one God, is no less clear as above.

Now, that we may further explain this doctrine, and remove some difficulties attending it, so far as the mysteriousness of the subject will admit, we shall endeavor to resolve the following queries.

Question 1. How can Three be One, and One Three?

Answer. Three are not said to be One, and One Three, in the same respect strictly. We do not say that there are Three persons in One person, nor that there are Three Gods in One God; but three persons or subsistences in the undivided essence of the One God.

Question 2. Why are these three subsistences called persons?

Answer 1. Because they are distinguished by personal relative properties; the Father begetting, the Son begotten, and the Holy Ghost proceeding.

2. They are styled I, Thou, and He. They speak, are spoken to, and spoken of.

3. They have each of them understanding and will. And besides,

4. They have personal characters, as Creator, Redeemer, Judge, Comforter, Intercessor, &c., and are covenanted with, sent, &c. Ps. cx. 1., 3, 6, 7; John viii. 1.6; xiv. 1.6, 1.7, 26.

In one word they have attributed to them and spoken of them every thing

essential to and descriptive of personality.

Question 3. In what respect is Christ the only begotten Son of God?

Answer 1. Not with respect to his human nature; for he was the only begotten Son of God before. In that case the Spirit, would have been the Father. And in his human nature he was manifested to be what he was before, namely, the only begotten of the Father.

2. Nor with respect to his resurrection; for he was so before he rose by his own power. And by his resurrection from the dead, he was manifested to be what he was before. Rom. i. 4.

3. Nor yet with respect to his mediatorial office; for it is his sonship that adds lustre to this office, Heb. iv. 14, as well as efficacy. 1 John i. 7. Neither is there any thing in that office that should give rise to the title Son, only Son, only begotten. Further, this did not make the Son a son, but a priest. Heb. i. 8; vii. 28. And his priesthood and sonship are distinctly spoken of, Acts viii. 37; ix. 20; while also in the capacity of a Mediator he was a servant.

4. It remains, then, that he was the only begotten Son of God by eternal generation, inconceivable and mysterious. He was his Son, John v. 18; 1 John v. 5; his own Son, Rom, viii. 3, 32; his only begotten Son, John i. 14, 18; iii. 16; 1 John iv. 9; was with him in the beginning, John i. 1; before his works of old, even from everlasting, Mic. v. 2; Prov. viii. 22, 23.

Question 4. If he was the Son of God by generation as to his divine nature, how could he be co-equal and co-eternal with the Father?

Answer. When we conceive of the Father and the Son, there is a priority in the order of nature, but not in the order of time. As God's eternal decrees, the mind and thought, the sun and light; though these be prior and successive among themselves in the order of nature, yet not in point of time. The instant the sun existed, light did exist also, proceeding from it, or, as it were, generated by it. So the instant there is a Father, there must be a Son; and as the Father exists a Father from eternity, so does the Son a Son.

Thus, dearly beloved, we have endeavored to set before you this essential article of our faith in as clear a manner as the narrowness of our limits, and the mysteriousness of the subject, would permit. But let no one presume to think that he can, by searching, find out the Almighty to perfection, nor vainly inquire where the Lord has not revealed. Let us rather be humbly

thankful, that the Divine Majesty has condescended to make such wondrous discoveries of his being and perfections.

Let us set the Triune God before us in all our ways and enjoyments, and rejoice in him, who is worthy of our highest confidence and purest affection, worthy of all divine worship and adoration.

Finally, brethren, let us be established in the present truth, nor suffer any to remove us from the firm basis of divine revelation. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be all honor, glory, divine worship, praise, power and dominion, both now and evermore. Amen.

BENJAMIN MILLER, Moderator.

WILLIAM VANHORN, Clerk.

Chapter III

Of God's Decrees

1. God hath *(a)* Decreed in himself from all Eternity, by the most wise and holy Council of his own will, freely and unchangeably, all things whatsoever comes to passe; yet so as thereby is God neither the author of sin, *(b)* nor hath fellowship with any therein, nor is violence offered to the will of the Creature, nor yet is the liberty, or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather *(c)* established, in which appears his wisdom in disposing all things, and power, and faithfulness *(d)* in accomplishing his Decree.

(a) Isa. 46:10; Eph. 1:11; Heb. 6:17; Rom. 9:15, Rom. 9:18. *(b)* Jas. 1:15, Jas. 1:17; 1Jn. 1:5. *(c)* Act. 4:27-28; Joh. 19:11. *(d)* Num. 23:19; Eph. 1:3-5.

2. Although God knoweth whatsoever may, or can come to passe upon all *(e)* supposed conditions; yet hath he not Decreed anything, *(f)* because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.

(e) Act. 15:18. *(f)* Rom. 9:11; Rom. 9:13; Rom. 9:16; Rom. 9:18.

3. By the decree of God for the manifestation of his glory *(g)* some men and Angels, are predestinated, or fore-ordained to Eternal Life, through Jesus Christ to the *(h)* praise of his glorious grace; others being left to act in their sin to their *(i)* just condemnation, to the praise of his glorious justice.

(g) 1Ti. 5:21; Mat. 25:41. *(h)* Eph. 1:5-6. *(i)* Rom. 9:22-23; Jud. 1:4.

4. These Angels and Men thus predestinated, and fore-ordained, are particularly, and unchangeably designed; and their *(k)* number so certain, and definite, that it cannot be either increased, or diminished.

(k) 2Ti. 2:19; Joh. 13:18

5. Those of mankind *(l)* that are predestinated to life, God before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret Council and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of his meer free grace and love; *(m)* without any other thing in the creature as a condition or cause moving him thereunto.

(l) Eph. 1:4; Eph. 1:9; Eph. 1:11; Rom. 8:30; 2Ti. 1:9; 1Th. 5:9. *(m)* Rom. 9:13; Rom. 9:16; Eph. 1:6; Eph. 1:12.

6. As God hath appointed the Elect unto glory, so he hath by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, fore-ordained *(o)* all the means thereunto, wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, *(p)* are redeemed by Christ, are effectually *(q)* called unto faith in Christ, by his spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith *(r)* unto salvation; neither are any other redeemed by Christ, or effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the Elect *(s)* only.

(o) 1Pe. 1:2; 2Th. 2:13. *(p)* 1Th. 5:9-10. *(q)* Rom. 8:30; 2Th. 2:13.

(r) 1Pe. 1:5. *(s)* Joh. 10:26; Joh. 17:9; Joh. 6:64.

7. The Doctrine of this high mystery of predestination, is to be handled with special prudence, and care; that men attending the will of God revealed in his word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their *(t)* eternal election; so shall this doctrine afford matter *(u)* of praise, reverence, and admiration of God, and *(x)* of humility, diligence, and abundant *(y)* consolation, to all that sincerely obey the Gospel.

(t) 1Th. 1:4-5; 2Pe. 1:10. *(u)* Eph. 1:6; Rom. 11:33. *(x)* Rom. 11:5-6.

(y) Luk. 10:20.

CIRCULAR LETTER

Philadelphia Baptist Association

"The Decrees of God"

By Rev. Abel Morgan, Pastor

Middletown Baptist Church

1775

The Association of elders and brethren of the several Baptist churches in Pennsylvania, and the colonies adjacent, held at Philadelphia, October 10th, 11th, and 12th, 1775.

To the several churches we are in connection with, send our Christian salutation.

Beloved Brethren, -- In the primitive times, when people were converted by the ministry of the gospel, and united together in church relation and fellowship, it was the practice of the Apostles to establish them in the truths which they had believed and professed, Acts xv. 41, for their edification and comfort, Acts ix. 31. We now, according to our measure, would endeavor to follow this worthy pattern, for the like excellent design. The subject, which next in order comes to be considered, is the doctrine of God's decree. Confession of faith, chap. III. Whereon we observe,

1. That God, the supreme, who is self-existent, and every way an independent sovereign, the creator of all things, hath an absolute right to dispose of all his creatures; and before his works of old, to appoint and determine all things to a certain end. This article of our belief, both scripture and reason do jointly and sufficiently confirm, Isa. xlvi. 10; Psalm xxxiii. 11; Provo xix. 21.
2. The rule of his fore-appointment, of what shall come to pass in time, is the wise counsel of his most holy will and pleasure. Eph. i. 11.
3. In accomplishing his purpose, no violence is offered to the will of the creature, good, Psalm cx. 3; or bad, James i. 13, 14; nor the use of means taken away, Ezek. xxxvi. 37; neither is God, in anywise, the author of sin, though he decreed to permit it to be, Acts xiv. 16; Gen. xlv. 5; Acts ii. 23.
4. The special objects of God's decree are angels and men.
5. When all the human race, by the sin of the first man, were involved in guilt, Rom. v. 12, and fallen under condemnation, and all become the children of wrath; it would manifestly be doing them no injustice, if they

were, to every individual, left in that state, and eternally punished for their sins: this would have been their proper desert, their just reward. But God, out of his mere free grace and love, without any moving cause in the parties chosen, hath predestinated some unto life, through a Mediator, Eph. i. 4; Rom. xi. 5, 6, (without any wrong done to others) together with all the means subservient to this end, viz., their redemption by the blood of Christ, and renovation by the Spirit of holiness, to the praise of his glorious grace; the other left to act in sin, to their final destruction, to the glory of divine justice, Rom. ix. 22, 23.

The bounds of a letter will not permit us to enter on the discussion of the several objections, and remove out of the way the many cavils, which are raised by men of different principles, in opposition to this scripture doctrine; that has been repeatedly well done heretofore by others; but only add a word, with a view to relieve and support those distressed souls, whoever and wherever they be, whilst they acknowledge this awful truth, but at the same time are greatly exercised about it; frequently raising objections against themselves, fearing they are not of the elect of God: and, should this be the case, they infer, that all their endeavors must be in vain, their acts of worship unacceptable. The consolations and promises of the gospel are proposed to them to little purpose. Their souls refuse to be comforted; their hope flags, their expectation fails; they are greatly disheartened; yea, the very duties of religion become to them difficult, and oftentimes burthensome; briefly, they are ready to halt, and to sink down in the gulf of despair, believing the decree of God to be immutable. So that this solemn truth, instead of administering joy to their souls, and exciting in them adoration and praise to God, becomes to them an occasion of terror, discouragement, and great depression of spirit. The topics, whence they generally derive these gloomy apprehensions are such as follow, viz., the gross darkness of mind under which they are shut up; no signs of election; extreme ignorance of God and of Christ; find no returns of prayer; so full of sin; manifold afflictions; cannot act faith; backslidings, unprofitableness, heart rising against God, and such like.

To remove these difficulties:

1. Let the parties consider that there may be very great and just reasons for the ground of these complaints, without calling in question their election.
2. Let them seriously observe the frame and temper of their soul under all or

any of these defects, whether a sense of their case excites in them more humiliation and sorrow for sin, Psalm xxxviii. 17, 18; and more vehement cries and ardent wishes for seasonable help, Ps. xxxviii. 4, 5, 21, 22. If so, the evidence is in their favor.

3. Let such know and learn, that the way for their relief is not by laboring to pry into the secret purpose of God, or in their thoughts to dwell upon it, to their own discouragement, but abide by, and cleave to, his revealed will, which directs all indigent ones to Christ the Mediator for supply, and to the use of those means prescribed for the satisfaction and peace of laboring souls: "Make your calling sure." 2 Pet. i.10. In so doing shall the fearful be able to look back, and know their election before time, and forward, and view their salvation to come, when time shall be no more. This glorious truth is not designed to deter troubled souls from coming to Jesus Christ.

4. It directly tends to administer support to the laboring soul, when we find those very springs of complaints, doubts, and fears, from which they argue to their disadvantage, are no other than what the Scripture declares to have been the case with the very elect of God; for instance, these complain of darkness, so did they, "Why hidest thou thyself?" Psalm x. 1. Job emphatically, xxiii. 8, 9. See Isa. i. 10. Do these sorrowful ones lack tokens of their election? But hath not God in special mercy hedged up their way, to keep them from sin, and made it bitter to their souls? Hos. ii. 6; Lam. iii. 19, 20. Do they not find thirstings after Christ? Psalm xlii. 1-3. Do they not groan earnestly; and are burdened, because of their depravity, &c.? 2 Cor. v. 2. These are encouraging tokens, the very characters of the elect; who also in their day bewailed their ignorance of God. Prov. xxx. 2, 3. The exhortation "to grow in the knowledge of Christ," intimates their deficiency therein. How pathetically did they expostulate with God about his deferring to answer their prayers. "Will the Lord cast off forever?" Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Psalm lxxvii. 7-3. "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear?" Hab. i. 2. How feelingly did they acknowledge themselves full of sin; "Mine iniquities are gone over my head." Psal. xxxviii. 3-8. "Wretched man that I am." Rom. vii. 18, 24. Do these fear because they cannot put forth acts of faith? Consider the case of the godly; "I am shut up, and I cannot come forth." Psalm lxxxviii. 8. Christ would have men to know their own insufficiency, John xv. 5; vi. 44; who himself is the author and finisher of faith. Hence, Song i. 4, "draw me." Sore afflictions are the very portion of the dear chosen ones of God in the

world. Psalm lxxiii. 10, 14; xxxiv.19; 1 Cor. xi. 32; Heb. xii. 6-8. Let these languishing souls hear the gracious word of promise to backsliders, Hos. xiv. 4. Christ teaches all the elect to esteem themselves unprofitable. Luke xvii. 10. Do these perplexed ones faint, because they find in themselves heart-risings against God? This indeed is very alarming and dreadful in its consequences; but there is on record an instance of this sad case, in one that was undoubtedly a chosen vessel, an elect of God. Jonah iv. 3, 4, 9, whose heart not only rose up against God, but also in his reply vindicated himself therein. "I do well to be angry." 'Tis probable this by far is an higher degree than any of these dejected ones are got to. Hence we observe, that not one distressed soul hath ground to argue against himself from any of the above-mentioned cases, or the like, that he is passed by, and, without hope, left to perish in his sins. None can conclude his preterition but from final impenitence, and the sin against the Holy Ghost. From the former he cannot, because he is yet in life; nor from the latter, because final impenitence is an inseparable ingredient of that sin.

5. Guard against every device of Satan, who aims to prevent people profiting by the gospel of Jesus Christ. 1 Pet. v. 8.

6. Inasmuch as we are authorized to encourage the weak, the feeble, and fearful to be strong. Isa. xxxv. 3, 4. We therefore exhort and charge all those into whose hands this may come, who are, and have been, sorely afflicted on the aforesaid account, that they would press forward in the ways of godliness, seek the Lord Jesus unfeignedly, pray without ceasing, and faint not, Luke xviii. 1, 7, endeavor for satisfactory experience of grace in their own souls; that hereafter they may rejoice in this, and every other truth of God.

Lastly, We would earnestly caution all persons, on the other hand, who confidently conclude themselves to be of the elect of God, to beware at all times of living a dissolute, vain, irreligious life, or giving themselves liberty to continue in sin, because ejection is unalterable; pleading or thinking they shall be saved, let them live and act as they will (this truth hath been thus horribly abused.) Such corrupt principles, wicked practices, and black characters, are inconsistent with the pure doctrines of the gospel. Remember that holiness becometh the house and people of the Lord forever, and is indispensably enjoined on everyone that nameth the name of Christ. 2 Tim. ii. 19; 2 Thess. ii.13; 1 Pet. i. 14, 16.

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever, Amen.

JOHN GANO, Moderator.

WILLIAM ROGERS, Clerk.

Chapter IV

Of Creation

1. In the beginning it pleased God the Father, (*a*) Son, and Holy Spirit, for the manifestation of the glory of (*b*) his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, to Create or make the world, and all things therein, (*c*) whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good.

(*a*) Joh. 1:2-3; Heb. 1:2; Job. 26:13 (*b*) Rom. 1:20. (*c*) Col. 1:16; Gen. 2:1-2.

2. After God had made all other Creatures, he Created (*d*) man, male and female, with (*e*) reasonable and immortal souls, rendring them fit unto that life to God; for which they were Created; being (*f*) made after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holyness; having the Law of God (*g*) written in their hearts, and power to fulfill it; and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was (*h*) subject to change.

(*d*) Gen. 1:27. (*e*) Gen. 2:7. (*f*) Ecc. 7:29; Gen. 1:26. (*g*) Rom. 2:14-15. (*h*) Gen. 3:6.

3. Besides the Law written in their hearts, they received (*i*) a command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; which whilst they kept, they were happy in their Communion with God, and had dominion (*k*) over the Creatures.

(*i*) Gen. 6:17; Gen. 3:8-10. (*k*) Gen. 1:26; Gen. 1:28.

Chapter V

Of Divine Providence

1. God the good Creator of all things, in his infinite power, and wisdom, doth *(a)* uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all Creatures, and things, from the greatest even to the *(b)* least, by his most wise and holy providence, to the end for the which they were Created; according unto his infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable Council of his *(c)* own will; to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness and mercy.

(a) Heb. 1:3; Job. 38:11; Isa. 10:1-11; Psal. 135:6. *(b)* Mat. 10:29-31.

(c) Eph. 1:11.

2. Although in relation to the foreknowledge and Decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass *(d)* immutably and infallibly; so that there is not any thing, befalls any *(e)* by chance, or without his Providence; yet by the same Providence he ordereth them to fall out, according to the nature of second causes, either *(f)* necessarily, freely, or contingently.

(d) Act. 2:23. *(e)* Pro. 16:33. *(f)* Gen. 8:22.

3. God in his ordinary Providence *(g)* maketh use of means; yet is free *(h)* to work, without, *(i)* above, and *(k)* against them at his pleasure.

(g) Act. 27:31; Act. 27:44; Isa. 55:10-11. *(h)* Hos. 1:7 *(i)* Rom. 4:19-21. *(k)* Dan. 3:27.

4. The Almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in his Providence, that his determinate Council *(l)* extendeth it self even to the first fall, and all other sinful actions both of Angels, and Men; (and that not by a bare permission) which also he most wisely and powerfully *(m)* boundeth, and otherwise ordereth, and governeth, in a manifold dispensation to his most holy *(n)* ends: yet so, as the sinfulness of their acts proceedeth only from the Creatures, and not from God; who being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be, the author or *(o)* approver of sin.

(l) Rom. 11:32-34; 2Sa. 1:1; 1Ch. 21:1. *(m)* 2Ki. 19:28; Psal. 76:10.

(n) Gen. 20:1. Isa. 10:6-7; Isa. 10:12. *(o)* Psal. 50:21; 1Jn. 2:16.

5. The most wise, righteous, and gracious God, doth oftentimes, leave for a

season his own children to manifold temptations, and the corruptions of their own heart, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption, and deceitfulness of their hearts, *(p)* that they may be humbled; and to raise them to a more close, and constant dependence for their support, upon himself; and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for other just and holy ends. So that whatsoever befalls any of his elect is by his appointment, for his glory, *(q)* and their good.

(p) 2Ch. 32:25-26; 2Ch. 32:31; 2Sa. 24:11; 2Cor. 12:7-9. *(q)* Rom. 8:28.

6. As for those wicked and ungodly men, whom God as a righteous judge, for former sin doth *(r)* blind and harden; from them he not only withholdeth his *(s)* Grace, whereby they might have been inlightned in their understanding, and wrought upon in their hearts: But sometimes also withdraweth *(t)* the gifts which they had, and exposeth them to such *(u)* objects as their corruptions makes occasion of sin; and withall *(x)* gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan, whereby it comes to pass, that they *(y)* harden themselves, even under those means which God useth for the softning of others.

(r) Rom. 1:24; Rom. 1:26; Rom. 1:28; Rom. 11:7-8. *(s)* Deu. 29:4.

(t) Mat. 13:12. *(u)* Deu. 2:30; 2Ki. 8:12-13. *(x)* Psa. 81:11-12; 2Th.

2:10-12. *(y)* Exo. 8:15; Exo. 8:32; Isa. 6:9-10; 1Pe. 2:7-8.

7. As the Providence of God doth in general reach to all Creatures, so after a most special manner it taketh care of his *(z)* Church, and disposeth of all things to the good thereof.

(z) 1Ti. 4:10; Amo. 9:8-9; Isa. 43:3-5.

CIRCULAR LETTER

Philadelphia Baptist Association

"Divine Providence"

By Rev. Samuel Jones

Pennepek Baptist Church

1779

The elders and messengers of the several Baptist churches meeting at Pennepek, Middletown, Piscataqua, Cohansie, Hopewell, Montgomery, Kingwood, Southampton, Philadelphia, Scotch Plains, Morristown, New Britain, Pitsgrove, Newtown, Dividing Creek, New Mills, Upper Freehold, Lyon's Farms, and Oblong, being met in Association at Philadelphia, October 12th and 13th, 1779.

To the said churches send greeting.

Dearly beloved brethren, -- Seventy-two years have now elapsed since the first Association that was held in this place; during which period, but more especially of late, we have been led to note many remarkable displays of Divine Providence, which, by appointment, is to be the subject of our present address. Confession of faith, chap. V.

When we admit the divine authority of the holy Scripture, and by the light thereof, together with that of nature, we discover the being and perfections of God, we are next led to consider his purposes and decrees, and the execution of these in the works of creation and providence. These are all material objects of faith, and main pillars, as well as essential parts of true religion.

That the all-wise and omnipotent Jehovah is the Creator and disposer of all things is a matter of general consent, discoverable by the light of nature; insomuch that creation and providence may be said to be the two testaments out of which natural religion is deduced; but still much more manifest by the sure testimony of the Scripture of truth. See Ps. civ.; Acts xvii. 25, 28, &c.

Creation is the effect of Almighty power and wisdom, whereby the eternal God created all things, visible and invisible, even the whole universe, out of nothing. Col. i. 16. But chiefly man, the glory of this lower creation, being made after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. Gen. i. 27.

By Divine Providence is meant the superintendence of the Deity over all his

works and all possible events. Whereby,

1. He upholds and sustains all things, animate and inanimate. Heb. i. 3; Acts xvii. 28.
2. Provides for all living. Acts xvii. 25; Ps. civ. 21; cxxxvi. 25.
3. And governs the whole universe. Ps. ciii. 19.

Providence is,

1. General, Acts xvii. 25, or particular, Matt. x. 29.
2. Mediate, by second causes, 1 Kings, xiii. 24; xxii. 22, and the fixed laws of nature. Or immediate by his will and appointment.
3. Ordinary, in the common course of things, or extraordinary. 1 Kings xvii. 4; Dan. vi. 22; iii. 27.

In this view we are led to conceive of the Divine Being as the head of a vast family, extending his care and beneficence to every individual of it; or as a great monarch, who has his eye not only on those near his throne, but extends the benefits of his benign influence to the remotest parts of his vast dominions. For as we would not expect the greatest to be above, so neither are the least below his notice; insomuch that a sparrow does not fall to the ground without him, and the very hairs of our heads are all numbered. Matt. x. 29, 30.

O how august and stupendous this work of God! It is a most rich display of all the divine perfections; especially of wisdom, goodness, and power; and it excites and improves all the powers, best faculties and affections of the soul, as well as every grace and virtue; as love, reverence, admiration, gratitude and the like. For who can contemplate such manifestation of power as we see in the ways of Providence, and not feel a reverential awe of him, who controls and sustains all creation? Who can view that infinite wisdom manifest in the whole, and not be filled with wonder and astonishment? Or who can trace the footsteps of goodness and mercy visible every where, but especially in the recovery of man, which is a particular dispensation of Providence, and not feel the springs of love, gratitude, and praise excited in him? Surely one would think it must be impossible; but we shall grow wiser and better while we read in the book of Providence that lies continually open before us. Yet, after all, we must remember that in our present state we can comprehend but a very small part of this vast whole, as it is mentioned in the

book of Job. "Lo, these are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him." Job xxvi. 14.

But as all the ways of God are mysterious to us in this imperfect state, while we are so prone to judge of the whole from seeing a part, so there lies one objection against the doctrine we are speaking of. Not such as has been made by those who are fond of caviling, but which has been a difficulty to the godly. To the Psalmist, Ps. lxxiii. 2, 5. To Jeremiah, Jer. xii. 1; Heb. i. 13; and to Job, x. 3, and many others since: namely, that it is not just and equal, the wicked being often prosperous and the righteous afflicted. To which it might be sufficient to say with the Apostle, "Who art thou that replest against God?" Rom. ix. 20.

But we would further observe,

1. Inequality is necessary in all governments, and the beauty of them, as there must be different members in a body.
2. Wicked men may have some virtues, which cannot be rewarded but in this life
3. All do not prosper.
4. The prosperous wicked are not so happy as they are thought to be. Prov. xiv. 13, 14.
5. Their prosperity will have an end; while, on the other hand,
6. The righteous have imperfections.
7. And afflictions are necessary to perfect them in grace and holiness.
8. Lastly, their reward will be hereafter, when the equality will be made. Ps. lxxxiii. 17.

In regard of the question, how Providence can be versant about evil actions without destroying the liberty of the will, but that man may still remain a free agent, we have but room to suggest, that what is natural in the act is of God, what is sinful of man, like the ascending of vapors and exhalations from all bodies is owing to the sun; but that stench should arise from any, is owing to their being corrupted in themselves. So, also, speaking is from God; but speaking wickedly from man.

As for the concerns of Providence with good actions, there is but little danger of our erring by ascribing too much to it.

Finally, brethren, the well ordering, sustaining, and overruling all things and all possible events, in the whole universe, and through all ages, is the object of Providence, under the direction of him, whose kingdom ruleth over all. Ps. ciii. 19.

Two or three things we would now point out by way of improvement, and so conclude.

First, We ought to accustom ourselves to see and acknowledge our God, and set him before us, in all these his ways, wherein his wisdom, power, mercy, and goodness shine.

1. That such a display of divine perfections may not pass unheeded.
2. That so much goodness may not be lost on us, and rise up in judgment against us.
3. That we may not miss of means so powerful to promote virtue and vital piety.
4. Wherein if we fail we must be stupid and ungrateful to a degree not only unworthy of the Christian, and the means we enjoy, but also of the powers we are endowed with. Dan. v. 23.

Second, When chastised, we ought to "hear the rod and him that has appointed it." Mich. vi. 9. This is and has been our case for some years past, which we have not room now to enlarge upon.

Third, When the profusion of a kind Providence is showered on our heads, it becomes us to be taught humility, dependence, love, and gratitude. Rom. ii. 4. And this has always been our case, though more remarkably of late, when the Lord remembered mercy in the midst of deserved judgment. For if you consider the steps whereby divine Providence interposed in our favor during the present contest with Great Britain, you must see and know that the most high God ruleth in the kingdom of men, and that he appointed over it whomsoever he will. Dan. v. 21.

Thus, dear brethren, we have just entered on the subject, and, as it were, traced some of its outlines, than which our limits would allow us little more. We shall now conclude in the words of the Apostle to the Romans, chap. xi. 33, 36. "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for

ever. Amen."

BENJAMIN MILLER, Moderator.

SAMUEL JONES. Clerk.

Chapter VI

Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment thereof

1. Although God created Man upright, and perfect, and gave him a righteous law, which had been unto life had he kept it, *(a)* and threatned death upon the breach thereof; yet he did not long abide in this honour; *(b)* Satan using the subtilty of the serpent to seduce Eve, then by her seducing Adam, who without any compulsion, did wilfully transgress the Law of their Creation, and the command given unto them, in eating the forbidden fruit; which God was pleased according to his wise and holy Councel to permit, having purposed to order it, to his own glory.

(a) Gen. 2:16-17 *(b)* Gen. 3:12-13; 2Cor. 3:1.

2. Our first Parents by this Sin, fell from their *(c)* original righteousness and communion with God, and we in them, whereby death came upon all; *(d)* all becoming dead in Sin, and wholly defiled, *(e)* in all the faculties, and parts, of soul, and body.

(c) Rom. 3:23. *(d)* Rom. 5:12 & c. *(e)* Tit. 1:15; Gen. 6:5; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:10-19.

3. They being the *(f)* root, and by Gods appointment, standing in the room, and stead of all mankind; the guilt of the Sin was imputed, and corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation, being now *(g)* conceived in Sin, and by nature children *(h)* of wrath, the servants of Sin, the subjects *(i)* of death and all other miseries, spiritual, temporal and eternal, unless the Lord Jesus *(k)* set them free.

(f) Rom. 5:12-19; 1Cor. 15:21-22; 1Cor. 15:45; 1Cor. 15:49. *(g)* Psa. 51:5; Job. 14:4. *(h)* Eph. 2:3. *(i)* Rom. 6:20. & Rom. 5:12. *(k)* Heb. 2:14; 1Th. 1:10.

4. From this original corruption, whereby we are *(l)* utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do *(m)* proceed all actual transgressions.

(l) Rom. 8:7; Col. 1:21. *(m)* Jas. 1:14-15; Mat. 15:19.

5. The corruption of nature, during this Life, doth *(n)* remain in those that are regenerated: and although it be through Christ pardoned, and mortified, yet both it self, and the first motions thereof, are truely and properly *(o)* Sin.

(*n*) Rom. 7:18; Rom. 7:23; Ecc. 7:20; 1Jn. 1:8. (*o*) Rom. 7:24-25;
Gal. 5:17.

CIRCULAR LETTER

Philadelphia Baptist Association

"The Fall of Man"

By Rev. Abel Morgan, Pastor

Middletown Baptist Church

1780

The elders and messengers of the several Baptist churches, meeting at Pennepek, Middletown, Piscataqua, Cohansie, Tredyffrin, Cape May, Hopewell, Brandywine, Montgomery, Southampton, Philadelphia, Cranberry, Scotch Plains, New Britain, Salem, Newtown, Dividing Creek, New Mills, Upper Freehold, Lyon's Farms, and Pittsgrove.

To the said churches send our Christian salutation.

Beloved Brethren, -- At the close of our annual Association, we now address you on the solemn subject of the sixth chapter of our Confession of faith, which treats of the Fall of Man.

Such is the excellency and usefulness of divine revelation contained in that sadly neglected book, the Bible; that it affords us an infallible certainty respecting things past, present, and to come, which do so nearly concern us to know; among other articles, man's creation, who was made upright, righteous and holy, after the likeness, or image of God, happy in the favor of God, and communion with him, endued with power to fulfil[l] the law, given him for the rule of his obedience to his Creator, in that perfect state.

Moreover, by the same word of truth, we are assured of the sorrowful change which befel[l] our first parents, by their acting contrary to the command of God; beguiled by Satan, the father of lies, man fell, lost his creation excellencies, his honor, his God, -- his favor, knowledge of him, communion with him, fitness for his service, and ability to perform it; lost his life, his life to God, even his natural or animal life being forfeited, he became subject to death, the sanction of the law, the penalty denounced in case of disobedience; then the consequents of his evil deed immediately took place, which are guilt and depravity, with all the miseries which do accompany the same, both present and future. Thus man became separated from God, an enemy unto him, to his glory and government, from the first sin, even until now -- obnoxious to the curse of a just law violated, and under the wrath of God due to transgressors; also, wo[e]fully polluted throughout soul and body, "We are

all as an unclean thing," Isa. lxiv. 6.

Man, by his departure from God, is become idolatrous, turned from the only true God unto self, which is the grand idol of the whole world ever since Adam's revolt. Self was the very alluring bait, wrapped up in the first temptation, "Ye shall be as gods." Now it cannot be otherwise, but that He who will not give his glory to another, should always abhor and detest anyone, and everyone, that sets up another god in the room of the true God, and lives to him as man doth to self.

Again, what further aggravates the evil of the first sin of man, is the capacity which Adam stood in, viz., as the public head and representative of all his posterity, -- that in him, and with him, all have sinned, and fell from happiness in his first transgression, "All have sinned," Rom. v. 12; which is evident not only by divine testimony, but is also universally manifested by the aversion to good, -- the ignorance, stupidity, selfishness, and propensity to evil apparent in everyone by nature, Eph. ii. 3.

May we all, therefore, brethren, not only assent to the truth of the historical narration of these things, but also know the absolute necessity of a real, abiding convincing sense of our case, thus ruined, guilty, and depraved. In order,

1. To suppress all pride, and high conceits of ourselves, our supposed excellency and goodness;
2. Truly to acknowledge whatever favors mankind receive, that they are every way gratuitous, and wholly undeserved;
3. For our humiliation before God, confession of our sins, and deep distress of soul;
4. To raise in our minds a becoming admiration of God's patience and forbearance with a sinful world, in that vindictive justice is not immediately executed on transgressors;
5. To learn the true and proper cause of his forbearance, - viz., the interposition of the Mediator, Christ Jesus, between the execution of the penalty and man's desert;
6. To give us enlarged views of rich mercy and grace with God, in constituting a way whereby to restore creatures so unworthy from present ruin and future misery, even by his own beloved Son;

7. To teach us the necessity we are under of a renovation;

Again, an abiding sense of our case is necessary, in order to make us all anxiously inquisitive about our acquaintance with, and an interest in, Christ the Mediator; and to excite all believers in him to continued thanksgiving and praise, that they should not henceforth live to themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again.

God, who is wise in counsel, and excellent in working, suffered or permitted man to fall, and thence took occasion to bring the greatest good out of the worst of evils, or overruled the fall of man, to the more abundant display of his divine perfections -- to the everlasting disappointment and confusion of his enemies, the security of his elect, and the endless praise of his glorious name.

By order,

ISAAC STELLE, Moderator.

WILLIAM ROGERS, Clerk.

Chapter VII

Of Gods Covenant

1. The distance between God and the Creature is so great, that although reasonable Creatures do owe obedience unto him as their Creator, yet they could never have attained the reward of Life, but by some *(a)* voluntary condescension on Gods part, which he hath been pleased to express, by way of Covenant.

(a) Luk. 17:10; Job. 35:7-8.

2. Moreover Man having brought himself *(b)* under the curse of the Law by his fall, it pleased the Lord to make a Covenant of Grace wherein he freely offereth unto Sinners, *(c)* Life and Salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them Faith in him, that they may be saved; and *(d)* promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal Life, his holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe.

(b) Gen. 2:17; Gal. 3:10; Rom. 3:20-21. *(c)* Rom. 8:3; Mar. 16:15-16; Joh. 3:16. *(d)* Eze. 36:26-27; Joh. 6:44-45; Psa. 110:3.

3. This Covenant is revealed in the Gospel; first of all to Adam in the promise of Salvation by the *(e)* seed of the woman, and afterwards by farther steps, untill the full *(f)* discovery thereof was compleated in the new Testament; and it is founded in that *(g)* Eternal Covenant transaction, that was between the Father and the Son, about the Redemption of the Elect; and it is alone by the Grace of this Covenant, that all of the posterity of fallen Adam, that ever were *(h)* saved, did obtain life and a blessed immortality; Man being now utterly incapable of acceptance with God upon those terms, on which Adam stood in his state of innocency.

(e) Gen. 3:15. *(f)* Heb. 1:1. *(g)* 2Ti. 1:9; Tit. 1:2. *(h)* Heb. 11:6; Heb. 6:13; Rom. 4:1-2, & c. Act. 4:12; Joh. 8:56.

CIRCULAR LETTER

Philadelphia Baptist Association

"God's Covenant"

By Rev. Samuel Jones, Pastor

Pennepek Baptist Church

1781

The elders and messengers of the several churches met in Association at Philadelphia, October 23d, 1781,

To the several churches in union with this Association send greeting.

Dearly beloved in the Lord, -- In the connection of divine truth and progress of our order, we come to write to you in the next place, of what, in our Confession of faith, Chap. VII., is called God's Covenant; by which is meant the transactions of God with and towards man, respecting his duty and happiness; more especially the exertions of infinite wisdom and mercy, in the contrivance and establishment of the scheme of redemption, for the recovery and salvation of lost man, through a precious and blessed Mediator.

Passing over the prohibition to Adam, respecting the forbidden fruit, which is commonly called the covenant of works, his being the public head and representative of his posterity, as he certainly was, Rom. 5:12, we come to the intimation made to him immediately after the fall, respecting the seed of the woman, that it should bruise the serpent's head; upon which is founded the notion of the covenant of grace made with Adam, which was nothing else than a bare discovery, revelation, and manifestation of the eternal counsel of God, respecting man's recovery, carrying in it a promise of eternal life. No stipulations and re-stipulations, no conditions whatever; nothing more nor less to be performed on Adam's part; nothing but a glorious manifestation, as was said before, of the rich grace and mercy of God in Christ. And the farther discovery of this rich grace, that was made to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was exactly of the same tenor; a promise, that in their seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed, Gen. 3:1; Gen. 4:1; Gen. 14:1. Not a word of a covenant, or any conditions. Hence, in the New Testament, where reference is had thereunto, the same language is constantly used; as for instance: "For the promise is unto you and your children," Act. 2:39. "Of this man's seed has God, according to his promise," Act. 13:23. "For the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers," Act. 26:6. "Heirs according to the

promise," Gal. 3:21-22, Gal. 3:29. "The promise of eternal inheritance," Heb. 9:19. "To perform the mercy promised," Luk. 1:72. "And this is the promise that he has promised us, even eternal life," 1Jn. 2:29. For all the promises of God in him, are not yea and nay, if you will, and if not, in the strain of a covenant, but yea and amen, 2Cor. 1:20. In like manner, we read of gifts: "If thou knewest the gift of God," Joh. 4:10. "Free gift," Rom. 5:15-18. "Unspeakable gift," 2Cor. 9:15. "Gave gifts unto men," Eph. 4:8. Hence, also, the administrations of grace are called the Old and New Testament, because a testament contains free gifts and legacies made over, and insured to the heirs. It is true we read in Isa. 49:21, "As for me, this is my covenant with them." And in Jer. 31:31-34, "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord," speaking of the gospel day.

With respect to which we observe,

First, That in these places you see nothing that looks like a covenant.

Secondly, That the word covenant, in the Old Testament, sometimes means a statute, ordinance, establishment, appointment and decree, as in Jer. 33:2; Gen. 1:1-11; Num. 18:19.

Thirdly, That the use of the word covenant might be more consonant with that legal dispensation, than that of a testament.

Fourthly and **lastly**, That it might seem odd to speak of a testament, while the testator was yet living, as the Apostle hints, Heb. 9:15-16. But when our Saviour was about to lay down his life, and considered himself as already dead, he lays aside the use of the word covenant, and takes up the more proper word testament, saying, "This is the new testament in my blood," Mat. 26:28. And ever afterward, the word testament was constantly used, when reference is had to the dispensations of grace, as you may see in the margin of your Bibles. And besides, when we consider the nature of a covenant, we clearly see there could be no possible room for such a thing ever to exist between God and man, respecting spiritual things; for the idea of a covenant necessarily includes these things following:

1. Mutual wants in the parties covenanting.
2. Mutual benefits enjoyed by them.
3. Power in each party to perform the conditions of the covenant.
4. Each party is brought under obligations to the other, by the performance of

those conditions.

5. Merit on both sides.

6. and lastly, Neither party ought to be under prior obligations to the other, respecting the conditions of the covenant; of which particulars not one can be admitted in the present case.

As for the Abrahamic covenant, as some call it, it only respected temporal things, and the externals of religion, though it had the promise of the Messiah tacked to it, and was therefore called the covenant of promise, Eph. 2:12. It was with regard to selecting Abraham and his descendants from the other nations of the earth to a national church state, and the enjoyment of the land of Canaan, the peaceable and quiet possession of which they were to enjoy, upon condition of their observing the external rituals of that dispensation, and being obedient, which they promised, and had in their power to do. And this was the covenant of which they received circumcision, an external mark or token, as a seal to confirm it, Gen. 12:18; Gen. 17:7-8; Gen. 26:4; Gen. 28:14; Exo. 19:3-9; Exo. 24:3-8; Lev. 26:3 Lev. 26:40; Deu. 5:29. The word covenant seems to have been introduced into the Christian system of religion, because it favored of a legal strain, so acceptable to those who are fond of terms and conditions to be performed by man; while others that do not favor legalism, yet too incautiously make use of the word covenant, in bare compliance with custom; though these are generally careful to inform us, that it means a testamentary covenant, a free, absolute, unconditional covenant, which is much the same thing as to say that it is no covenant at all.

The sum, then, is this, that the glorious dispensations and manifestations of the rich grace and mercy of God in Christ, contain free, absolute, and unconditional promises of the free, rich, and unmerited gifts of God, conveyed to the heirs as legacies, in a testamentary way.

Having thus shown you, dear brethren, that there can be no such thing as a covenant between God and man, respecting spiritual blessings and service, we come now to consider what foundation there is to style the glorious transactions between the persons of the ever blessed Trinity, respecting man's recovery, a covenant; and here, undoubtedly, there is some appearance of that kind. If ever there was a covenant of grace, this is it. If ever there was a covenant of redemption, here you will find it. And, on the part of Christ, a covenant of works too; forasmuch as the great work of redemption, the

fulfilling of the law of God, in behalf of his people, for whom he undertook as their surety, was performed by him, Psa. 119:122; Isa. 38:14.

The passages of Scripture that speak of this glorious transaction as a covenant, are these following: "And my covenant shall stand fast with him," Ps. 89:28; "And give thee for a covenant of the people," Isa. 42:6; Isa. 49:8; "Neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed," Isa. 56:4, Isa. 56:6; "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant," Zec. 9:11; "Even the messenger of the covenant," Mal. 3:1. But then it is spoken of under other views, in these that follow: "According to the eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord," Eph. 3:11; "And the counsel of peace shall be between them both," Zec. 6:13; "For I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God," Act. 22:21; "The immutability of his counsel," Heb. 6:11; "Being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," Act. 2:23. And besides, Christ is said to be foreordained to that work, 1Pe. 1:20; sent, Joh. 10:35; to have received a commandment, Joh. 10:18; was therefore a servant, Isa. 42:1; cheerfully obeyed, Psa. 40:7-8; and was rewarded, Psa. 2:8; Php. 2:9. From the whole, then, we see, that there was a counsel held in eternity, even from everlasting, respecting the recovery of man; that the Triune God did then contrive, find out, adjust and settle, speaking after the manner of men, the whole plan and scheme of that great and glorious work, who should be saved, by what means, and after what manner; that the Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, should be a Mediator, should undertake for his chosen ones as their surety, and should assume human nature, that he might make satisfaction to divine justice in their behalf; that all the gifts and graces necessary for the purpose should be treasured in him, Col. 1:19. That the blessed Spirit should co-operate in manifesting the whole to the world, and applying the same to the chosen ones, namely, by enlightening their darkened understandings, working in them faith and repentance, changing their vile affections, converting them from the service of sin and Satan, to the service of the living God, carrying on the work of grace begun, and keeping them by the power of God, unto salvation; by every means making them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, and finally bringing them to the full possession of it.

Thus, dear brethren, we have briefly laid before you the plan of our redemption, as concerted in eternity, and brought into effect in time. You see the glorious covenant of grace, which was well ordered in all things, and

sure. You see the Son of God appointed to the mediatorial work, and all grace treasured up in him for that purpose. You see him undertake, go through with it, and the Spirit co-operate to accomplish the whole. You see the dispensations of grace to man are free, absolute, and unconditional; the gifts of God dispersed in a testamentary way, free and firm. Nothing of works, but all of grace. Nothing of the will of man, but all of the will of God; that we might all, and at all times, cry grace, grace, and whosoever glorieth, might glory in the Lord.

O blessed and glorious scheme! What a rich display have we here of the wisdom, justice, holiness, truth, mercy, pity, compassion, and condescension of God! See the harmony of the divine attributes in this stupendous plan, that is every way worthy of a God! What shall we render unto him for such rich, unmerited grace! Never to the endless ages of eternity, never shall we be able to render adequate compensation. O that the love of God were abundantly shed abroad in each of our hearts, that we might for ever admire, with astonishment admire, his rich grace; that we might for ever love, fear, honor, reverence, and serve him, with all our hearts unfeignedly.

"Now, the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

By order of the Association,

SAMUEL JONES, Moderator.

THOMAS FLEESON, Clerk.

Chapter VIII

Of Christ the Mediator

1. It pleased God in his eternal purpose, to chuse and ordain the Lord Jesus his only begotten Son, according to the Covenant made between them both, *(a)* to be the Mediator between God and Man; the *(b)* Prophet, *(c)* Priest and *(d)* King; Head and Saviour of his Church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world: Unto whom he did from all Eternity *(e)* give a people to be his seed, and to be by him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.

(a) Isa. 42:1; 1Pe. 1:19-20. *(b)* Act. 3:22. *(c)* Heb. 5:5-6. *(d)* Psa. 2:6; Luk. 1:33; Eph. 1:23; Heb. 1:2; Act. 17:31 *(e)* Isa. 53:10; Joh. 17:6; Rom. 8:30.

2. The Son of God, the second Person in the Holy Trinity, being very and eternal God, the brightness of the Fathers glory, of one substance and equal with him: who made the World, who upholdeth and governeth all things he hath made: did when the fullness of time was come take unto him *(f)* mans nature, with all the Essential properties, and common infirmities thereof, *(g)* yet without sin: being conceived by the Holy Spirit in the Womb of the Virgin Mary, the Holy Spirit coming down upon her, and the power of the most High overshadowing her, *(h)* and so was made of a Woman, of the Tribe of Judah, of the Seed of Abraham, and David according to the Scriptures: So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, were inseparably joined together in one Person: without conversion, composition, or confusion: which Person is very God, and very Man; yet one *(i)* Christ, the only Mediator between God and Man.

(f) Joh. 1:1; Joh. 1:14; Gal. 4:4. *(g)* Rom. 8:3; Heb. 2:14; Heb. 2:16; Heb. 2:17; Heb. 4:15. *(h)* Luk. 1:27; Luk. 1:31; Luk. 1:35. *(i)* Rom. 9:5; 1Ti. 2:5.

3. The Lord Jesus in his humane nature thus united to the divine, in the Person of the Son, was sanctified, & anointed *(k)* with the Holy Spirit, above measure; having in him *(l)* all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; in whom it pleased the Father that *(m)* all fullness should dwell: To the end that being *(n)* holy, harmless, undefiled, and full *(o)* of Grace, and Truth, he might be thoroughly furnished to execute the office of a Mediator, and *(p)* Surety; which office he took not upon himself, but was thereunto *(q)* called by his

Father; who also put (*r*) all power and judgement in his hand, and gave him Commandement to execute the same.

(*k*) Psa. 45:7; Act. 10:38; Joh. 3:34. (*l*) Col. 2:3. (*m*) Col. 1:19. (*n*) Heb. 7:26. (*o*) Joh. 1:14. (*p*) Heb. 7:22. (*q*) Heb. 5:5. (*r*) Joh. 5:22; Joh. 5:27; Mat. 28:18; Act. 2:36.

4. This office the Lord Jesus did most (*s*) willingly undertake, which that he might discharge he was made under the Law, (*t*) and did perfectly fulfill it, and underwent the (*u*) punishment due to us, which we should have born and suffered, being made (*x*) Sin and a Curse for us: enduring most grievous sorrows (*y*) in his Soul; and most painful sufferings in his body; was crucified, and died, and remained in the state of the dead; yet saw no (*z*) corruption: on the (*a*) third day he arose from the dead, with the same (*b*) body in which he suffered; with which he also (*c*) ascended into heaven: and there sitteth at the right hand of his Father, (*d*) making intercession; and shall (*e*) return to judge Men and Angels, at the end of the World.

(*s*) Psa. 40:7-8; Heb. 10:5-11; Joh. 10:18. (*t*) Gal. 4:1; Mat. 3:15. (*u*) Gal. 3:13; Isa. 53:6; 1Pe. 3:18. (*x*) 2Cor. 5:21. (*y*) Mat. 26:37-38; Luk. 22:44; Mat. 27:46. (*z*) Act. 13:37. (*a*) 1Cor. 15:3-4. (*b*) Joh. 20:25; Joh. 20:27. (*c*) Mar. 16:19; Act. 1:9-11. (*d*) Rom. 8:34; Heb. 9:24. (*e*) Act. 10:42; Rom. 14:9-10; Act. 1:10. [It appears that the reference to Act. 1:10 in the original manuscript is an error. Most modern editions have Act. 1:11, which seems more relevant.]

5. The Lord Jesus by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, which he through the Eternal Spirit once offered up unto God, (*f*) hath fully satisfied the Justice of God, procured reconciliation, and purchased an Everlasting inheritance in the Kingdom of Heaven, (*g*) for all those whom the Father hath given unto him.

(*f*) Heb. 9:14; Heb. 10:14; Rom. 3:25-26. (*g*) Joh. 17:2; Heb. 9:15.

6. Although the price of Redemption was not actually paid by Christ, till after his Incarnation, (*) yet the vertue, efficacy, and benefit thereof were communicated to the Elect in all ages successively, from the beginning of the World, in and by those Promises, Types, and Sacrifices, wherein he was revealed, and signified to be the Seed of the Woman, which should bruise the Serpents head; (*h*) and the Lamb slain from the foundation of the World: (*i*) Being the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

(*) 1Cor. 4:10; Heb. 4:2; 1Pe. 1:10-11. (*h*) Rev. 13:8. (*i*) Heb. 13:8.

7. Christ in the work of Mediation acteth according to both natures, by each nature doing that which is proper to it self; yet by reason of the Unity of the Person, that which is proper to one nature, is sometimes in Scripture attributed to the Person (*k*) denominated by the other nature.

(*k*) Joh. 3:13; Act. 20:28.

8. To all those for whom Christ hath obtained eternal redemption, he doth certainly, and effectually (*l*) apply, and communicate the same; making intercession for them, uniting them to himself by his spirit, (*m*) revealing unto them, in and by the word, the mystery of salvation; perswading them to believe, and obey; (*n*) governing their hearts by his word and spirit, and (*o*) overcoming all their enemies by his Almighty power, and wisdom; in such manner, and wayes as are most consonant to his wonderful, and (*p*) unsearchable dispensation; and all of free, and absolute Grace, without any condition foreseen in them, to procure it.

(*l*) Joh. 6:37; Joh. 10:15-16; Joh. 17:9; Rom. 5:10. (*m*) Joh. 17:6; Eph. 1:9; 1Jn. 5:20. (*n*) Rom. 8:9; Rom. 8:14. (*o*) Psa. 110:1; 1Cor. 15:25-26. (*p*) Joh. 3:8; Eph. 1:8.

9. This office of Mediator between God and Man, is proper (*q*) onely to Christ, who is the Prophet, Priest, and King of the Church of God; and may not be either in whole, or any part thereof transfer'd from him to any other.

(*q*) 1Ti. 2:5.

10. This number and order of Offices is necessary; for in respect of our (*r*) ignorance, we stand in need of his propheticall Office; and in respect of our alienation from God, (*s*) and imperfection of the best of our services, we need his Priestly office, to reconcile us, and present us acceptable unto God: and in respect of our averseness, and utter inability to return to God, and for our rescue, and security from our spiritual adversaries, we need his Kingly office, (*t*) to convince, subdue, draw, uphold, deliver, and preserve us to his Heavenly Kingdome.

(*r*) Joh. 1:18. (*s*) Col. 1:21; Gal. 5:17. (*t*) Joh. 16:8; Psa. 110:3; Luk. 1:74-75.

CIRCULAR LETTER

Philadelphia Baptist Association, 1782

"Christ the Mediator"

By Rev. Oliver Hart, Pastor
Hopewell Baptist Church, N. J.
1782

The ministers and messengers of the several Baptist churches, met in Association, at Philadelphia, October 22d, 1782.

Send Christian salutation to the churches with whom we are in union.

Well beloved in our dear Redeemer, -- We are now, in course, to address you on the subject contained in the eighth chapter of our Confession of Faith, which treats of Christ the Mediator.

A mediator is concerned with parties at variance, betwixt whom he stands as a middle person, and his business is to bring them together and make peace between them. Christ acts in the capacity of a Mediator between God and men, 1Ti. 2:5. "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." For the elucidation of this point, we may,

- I.** Consider what a Mediator between God and men supposes.
- II.** Take a view of the appointment of Christ to that office.
- III.** Consider his ability, suitableness, and qualifications for the great work.
- IV.** How he hath effected it, or what he hath done for that purpose.
- V.** Point out some of the blessed effects of Christ's mediatorship.

I. A Mediator between God and men supposes --

First, A difference subsisting between them. This commenced upon Adam's eating the forbidden fruit; prior to which the most cordial amity and friendship subsisted between God and man. But this first act of disobedience broke the tender ties of love and esteem. Adam flew from, as dreading the divine presence; and soon contracted a contrariety of soul to the perfections of the Deity, and a horrid enmity against God. Thus the staff of friendship was broken, and the quarrel commenced, entirely on the part of man. On the other hand, God, whose law had been violated, and whose goodness and friendship had been abused, appeared in the disagreeable light of an enemy to man; and, in fact, he was an injured sovereign, insisting that reparation

should be made for the dishonor done him, by this, violation of faith and breach of friendship.

Second, A Mediator between God and men, supposes inability on man's part to repair the injuries done by sin, or to restore himself to the divine favor. Could he have done this, there would have been no need of the interposition of a Mediator; but the divine law was to be punctually observed, and satisfaction was to be made for the breach of it; which were impossible terms to man in his fallen state.

Third, A Mediator between God and men seems to suppose, that God could not, consistent with the honor due to his law, and the glory of his divine perfections, pardon man and receive him into favor, merely as a simple act of mercy. Had he done so, his justice must have bled, his holiness would have been tarnished, his truth shaken, and the rights of his throne and government infringed. Consequences, which it would be horrid and blasphemous to attribute to any of the proceedings of the Almighty; for the Judge of all the earth will do right. Hence appears the necessity of a Mediator. And this leads us,

II. To take a view of the designation or appointment of Christ to that office. In order to which, we must look into the transactions of the Deity from eternity, before his works of old, Prov. viii. 22; for thus early was Christ appointed to the mediatorial office, in the counsel, decree, and purpose of Jehovah. The Apostle Peter confirms this truth with a strong note of asseveration, 1Pe. 1:20, where, after having spoke of redemption by the precious blood of Christ, he says, "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world." And our Lord himself fully establishes this point, Pro. 8:23, "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was," -- set up, constituted, or appointed Mediator. God, from eternity, foresaw that Adam would fall from his allegiance, integrity, and fidelity; and that the whole human race would be involved in guilt, and must inevitably perish, unless a medium were provided for their recovery, in a way consistent with the glory of the divine perfections. To effect which, the three Persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, formed a council, and entered into a covenant of grace, in order to lay the plan on which the salvation and happiness of fallen man should proceed; and to determine which of those divine persons should engage in the arduous work, Jehovah,

the Father, in his manifold wisdom, having predestinated a select number of the fallen race to the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, (Eph. 1:5; Eph. 3:10-11,) now proposed the business, or work of saving the elect, to Jehovah the Son; as well knowing the love he bare to them, as also with what alacrity he would comply with his will, proposing to furnish him with a body, and every way equip him for the discharge of his trust. The Son, whose will was the same with that of the Father, readily consented to engage in the work, and did in effect, say, "Father, thy will is that rebellious man should obtain favor, the means therefore of his restoration shall not be wanting; here am I, send me on that important design. Man shall be saved, in a way that will secure the honors of divine government; and by means through which the glory of the divine perfections will shine forth with the brightest effulgence." The cheerfulness with which Christ then complied with the requisition of the eternal Father, is pointed out by the Psalmist, Psa. 40:7-8, "Then said I, lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." And Christ himself is represented as speaking of his being appointed to the mediatorial office, by the eternal Father, in Psa. 89:19-20, "Then thou spakest in vision to the holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon One that is mighty; I have exalted One chosen out of the people; I have found David my servant, with my holy oil have I anointed him." Thus it appears that God was in Christ, even from everlasting, reconciling the elect world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, 2Cor. 5:19; and that Christ was thus early chosen and appointed to the mediatorial office, in the counsel of peace, which was between them both, namely, the Father and the Son; and in the covenant of grace, of which Christ is the Mediator, Heb. 12:24.

III. We pass on to consider the ability, suitableness, and qualifications of Christ for the great work.

Had not Christ been able, fit and every way qualified for the discharge of the mediatorial office, the work might have been marred in his hands; God might have been frustrated in his designs of mercy to his creatures, and all mankind might have perished in their sins. Events which cannot be admitted, even in idea; for God laid help upon One that is mighty, and exalted One chosen out of the people; every way able to save, even to the uttermost, Psa. 89:19; Heb. 7:25.

First, The ability of Christ to execute the office of a Mediator will appear, when we consider who and what he was. He was no other than the eternal Son of God, of the same nature and essence with Jehovah the Father; for he and the Father were one; of one nature or essence, equal in power and glory; equally possessed of divine attributes and godhead characters, and alike objects of divine worship and adoration. He was the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person; who upheld all things by the word of his power; superior even to angels, and the object of their religious adoration and worship, Heb. 1:3 Heb. 1:6. And even as Mediator, all power in heaven and earth was given unto him. Thus powerful, thus able, was the divine person chosen and appointed to the office of a Mediator between God and men. We will proceed,

Second, To consider his suitableness or fitness for the discharge of that office. Power, simply considered, did not render him eligible. No, not even his eternal power and godhead. But what principally fits Christ for the execution of his mediatorial office, is the union of the divine and human natures in his one person. Hereby he is Immanuel, God with us; and being partaker of both natures, he must have an interest in, and a concern for both; therefore, while he mediates for man, he must still have a view to the glory of God.

Not to take any notice of his suitableness as the Son of God, and middle person of the Trinity, which yet seems to have some weight, it was necessary that the Mediator should be man, possessed of a human body and a reasonable soul, and so in all points be made like to his brethren, in whose cause he engaged; that he might appear to be their brother and near kinsman, after the flesh; which must afford them the greatest encouragement, when they fly for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them. Nothing could affect -- nothing could encourage the distressed sons of Jacob more than those tender -- those moving words, "I am Joseph, your brother." And nothing can more encourage the spiritual Israel, than to know that their Mediator and days-man is their brother, kinsman, and friend. Again, it was necessary that satisfaction and atonement for sin should be made in the same nature that had sinned; therefore, the Mediator must be man. The apostle confirms this observation when he says, "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham," Heb. 2:16; intimating that the nature of angels would not have been eligible to have made conciliation

for the sins of human nature. Moreover, it was needful that the Mediator should be man, that he might be capable of obeying the law, given to man and broken by him. Therefore, "he was made of a woman, and made under the law, that he might redeem them that "were under the law," Gal. 2:4-5. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Further, it was necessary that the Mediator should be man, that he might be capable of dying, to make an atonement for the sins of men. As God, he could not die. And "without shedding of blood there could be no remission." Therefore, a body was prepared for him, that he might die, the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God, 1Pe. 3:18. In fine, it was needful the Mediator should be man, "that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest;" have a fellow-feeling "with his people under their infirmities -- sympathise with them under their afflictions, and succor them under their temptations. Heb. 2:17; Heb. 4:15.

But then, the Mediator must not only be man, he must be more than man; he must be a divine person; otherwise he would not be able to draw nigh unto God, and treat with him about the terms on which peace was to be restored to guilty man; and enter into a covenant with him to perform those conditions. "For, who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord?" Jer. 30:21. Could men or angels have done this? No. None but Jehovah's fellow was equal to this arduous task. Moreover, had the Mediator been only man, he could never have supported under the amazing load of sufferings he had to endure; therefore, he must be God as well as man. All the sins of an elect world were imputed to him, and all the ponderous weight of divine wrath, demerited by those sins, was to fall on his devoted head. "Surely," saith the prophet, "he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows," Isa. 53:4. A load which would not only have borne down an individual of the human race, but even crushed, as it were, to atoms, all created intelligences, angels as well as men. None could have sustained the stroke of that flaming sword, divine justice, but that wonderful Man, even the God-Man, who was Jehovah's Fellow, Zec. 13:7. In fine, it was necessary that Christ should be God, to raise himself from the dead; for had he remained in the grave, we must have perished in our sins, 1Cor. 15:17-18. And to have raised himself, had he been only man, he could not; therefore, he must be God.

Now this Mediator was not only God and man, but he was the God-man; God and man in one person. The human nature was taken into union with, and

subsisted in the person of the Son of God. And this personal union was necessary in order to give efficacy, dignity, and merit to his obedience and sufferings. Had he been a mere man, his obedience and righteousness could have been beneficial only to himself; nor could his sufferings and death have atoned for the sins of others; but being God and man, in one person, his mediatorial righteousness is the righteousness of God, and therefore all-sufficient to justify men; and his blood is the blood of the Son of God, and so cleanses from all sin, and is a proper atonement for it. And in this view, God is said to have purchased the church "with his own blood," Act. 20:28. Thus having taken a view of the ability and suitableness of Christ for the office of Mediator, we shall,

Third, Consider his qualification for the great work. Although the ability and suitableness of Christ, involve the idea of qualifications for the execution of his mediatorial office, yet those spoken of are purely personal, or such as relate to his person as the God-man; besides which, he sustains various relative characters and offices, which qualify him for his work, as,

1. That of a covenant head to the elect. As such, God chose him from all eternity, and chose all his people in him, as members of his mystical body, Isa. 52:1; Eph. 1:4. As such, God made a covenant with him of life and peace, respecting the salvation and happiness of his people. This covenant was confirmed of God, in Christ, i. e., made sure with his covenant-people, in Christ, their head and representative. All the promises and blessings of the covenant are secured to the elect in Christ, their federal head. All that Christ did and suffered, was in their room and stead. They were crucified with Christ, arose from the dead, ascended up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God with him; or in him representatively, as their covenant head, Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:1; Eph. 2:6.

2. Christ is the surety of his people. As such, he drew nigh to God, in covenant, and engaged to do and suffer all that the law and justice of God required, to make satisfaction for their sins. He put himself in their law place, took the whole debt of his people upon himself, and became re[s]ponsible for it. They owed a debt of obedience to the law, and a debt of punishment for the violation of it; this double debt he assumed payment of, and did pay: in consequence of which, the elect, who were the principal debtors, were set free; and Jehovah, the Father, said, "Deliver them from going down to the pit;

I have found a ransom," Job. 33:24. Although the ransom price was not actually paid until the death of the surety; yet he being the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, in the decrees and purposes of God, who had accepted of his surety ship -- engagements, the virtue and efficacy of his obedience, sufferings and death was applied to all the Old Testament saints; and they were justified, pardoned, and saved thereby, as fully and amply as those under the New, 2Cor. 5:19; Act. 15:11; Heb. 11:13.

3. The Mediator is an advocate for all the chosen people of God, 1Jn. 2:1. In his character he drew nigh unto God, in the eternal council and covenant of grace, "and made intercession for the transgressors," Isa. 53:12. This he did, not by laboring to extenuate their crimes, but by offering himself as their sponsor, to stand in their room and stead; bear their sins; make an atonement for their guilt; restore to the law its honors, and answer all the demands of justice, Isa. 53:4-6; Rom. 5:11; Isa. 42:1. And the advocacy of the Mediator proved efficacious to the pardoning, justifying, and glorifying an elect world, Rom. 8:33-34.

4. Another office which Christ sustains, is that of a prophet, Act. 3:22. Under this character he was expected by the Jews, Joh. 6:14, and in this capacity he acted as Mediator. As a prophet, he not only foretold future events, as the destruction of Jerusalem, the calamities that should befall the Jews, the end of the world, &c.; but he taught, and does teach his people, so as never to be taught. He teaches the knowledge of God, even the saving knowledge of the Most High, as a God of grace and mercy, as a God in covenant, pacified towards poor sinners, notwithstanding all that they have done, Joh. 17:3; Eze. 16:63. He teaches the knowledge of himself, as the only and alone Mediator, the Redeemer and Saviour: of lost sinners, Mat. 11:28. He teaches man to know himself, that he is a sinner, lost and undone, without power to help or deliver himself, and the necessity of a better righteousness than that of his own, Php. 3:8-9. He teaches the necessity of holiness in order to happiness, Heb. 12:14. All which, this great Prophet teaches powerfully and efficaciously, by his word and Spirit.

5. Again, the Mediator is a priest, Psal. 110:4. He is "an High Priest over the house of God," Heb. 10:21. The business of a priest was to minister at the sanctuary, and offer up gifts and sacrifices for the sins of the people, Heb. 8:3. "For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore

it is necessary that this man should have somewhat also to offer;" and for this purpose a body was prepared him: a true body and a reasonable soul, even the whole of human nature; which being united to the person of the Son of God, was offered up a sacrifice, to satisfy divine justice for the sins of an elect world. And by this oblation a true and proper atonement was made for sin, satisfaction to divine justice was given, the wrath of an offended Deity was appeased, and sinners have free access unto God, as a God in covenant, a Father and Friend. Amazing scheme of salvation! Astonishing to men and angels! 1Pe. 1:12. Intercession was another branch of the priestly office. Christ ever lives to make intercession for his people, Heb. 7:25. He prays for them that they may be pardoned, justified, sanctified, and saved; yea, he prays that where he is, there they may be also, that they may behold his glory, Joh. 17:24. But,

6. The Mediator is also a king, Psalms. 2:6. Saints are the subjects of his mediatorial kingdom; whom he rules by the most wholesome laws; and unto whom he hath given a most glorious charter of privileges, contained in the covenant of grace; which is ordered in all things and sure, 2Sa. 23:5. He rules in his people by the power of divine grace, and he rules for them, conquering and subduing all his and their enemies; and "he must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet," 1Cor. 15:25. These are some of Christ's qualifications for his work as Mediator.

IV. We are now to consider how he hath effected it, or what he hath done for that purpose.

Besides those eternal transactions and covenant engagements, already taken notice of, and in consequence thereof, the eternal Son of God did, in time, take upon him human nature, with all its sinless infirmities. According to ancient predictions he was to be made of the woman's seed, and born of a virgin; therefore he was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin Mary; of whom he was born, free from sin. Thus "the Word was made flesh," and dwelt with men on earth; some of whom "beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," Joh. 1:14. The grand design of his incarnation was to save an elect world: in order to which, as he was made of a woman, so he was made under the law. He was born under obligations to keep the law, as the surety of his people. The law must be kept, or man could not be saved. It is holy, just, and

good, righteous in all its demands. Perfect obedience it positively requires; a single deviation therefrom exposes to the curse, Gal. 3:10. Had Christ failed only in one point, his mediation would have been of no avail. But his obedience was complete. Divine justice could not charge it with the least flaw. "Such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," Heb. 7:26. And such an one was Jesus Christ: "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." 1Pe. 2:22.

Again, Christ, as Mediator, not only kept the law inviolable, but he died the cursed death of the cross, to atone for the sins of his people. Without shedding of blood there could be no remission. And as the blood of slain beasts was insufficient to cleanse from sin, Christ offered his own, Heb. 9:19. "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered once into the holy place: having obtained eternal redemption for us." "The blood of Jesus Christ," being the blood of the Son of God, hath a divine efficacy, and "cleanseth from all sin," 1Jn. 1:7. But, not only did Jesus suffer in his body, he endured infinitely greater torture in his soul. His bodily sufferings were indeed great, beyond compare. In this view, he was emphatically "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," Isa. 53:3. His wounded, mangled, bruised body, was so changed from what it had been, as to excite astonishment in the beholders. "As many were astonished at thee. His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons [of] men," Isa. 52:14. So distorted were his limbs, as to extract from him this grievous complaint; "My bones are all out of joint. I may tell all my bones, they look and stare upon me," Psa. 22:14-17. Let imagination paint to faith's view the innocent Jesus, clothed in a robe of mock majesty, enveloped round with invidious foes taunting and jeering at him, spitting on his face, smiting it with their hands, piercing his head with a crown of thorns, plowing furrows, long and deep, on his back, with a whip of wires; driving iron spikes through his hands and feet, nailing them to the cross, and thus suspending him between heaven and earth, exposed naked to the inclement rays of a burning sun, a spectacle to men and angels. Thus behold the agonizing Jesus, and judge whether there were ever any sorrows like unto his sorrows, or pains comparable to those he endured. But, after all, the sufferings of his soul were infinitely superior to these. These he bore -- those he deprecated. Apprehensions of the divine wrath, which was to fall on his soul, caused his human nature to shrink, and drew from him these mournful accents, "Now is

my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father save me from this hour," Joh. 12:27. And when the vials of wrath began to be poured out upon him, he was in an agony -- sweat great drops of blood, and said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt," Luke xxii. 44; Mat. 26:38-39. And when his soul was made an offering for sin, and divine wrath was poured out upon him to the uttermost, he cried out, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Mat. 27:46. Thus Jesus, the Mediator, suffered for us men, and for our salvation. Thus he died, commending his spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father, Heb. 2:10. And that his humiliation might be reduced to the lowest degree, he was laid in the grave, where he continued three days and three nights, but his body "saw no corruption." On the third day he arose from the dead; for it was not in the power of the grave to hold him. Though he had been put to death in the flesh, he was quickened by the Spirit, Heb. 3:18. The resurrection of Christ from the dead is an essential part of his mediatorial work; for had he not been raised out of the grave, all that he had done would have been ineffectual to the salvation of sinners. Hence saith the apostle, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, you are yet in your sins," 1Cor. 15:17. If the Head had continued under the power of death, the members must have remained there also. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept," 1Cor. 15:20. After his resurrection he continued many days on earth, showing himself to his disciples; comforting, encouraging, and confirming them; and then "ascended up on high, leading captivity captive;" when the everlasting doors were opened to receive the King of glory; and the heavenly arches rang with joyful acclamations; shouting, The Redeemer! God the Father manifested his approbation of all that he had done, and the high esteem he had for him as Mediator, by placing him at his right hand, "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named," Eph. 2:21. There the Mediator now sits, pleading the value of his merits on behalf of his chosen people; and we may be sure that "he is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them," Heb. 7:25.

V. We proceed to point out some of the effects of his mediatorship.

First, With regard to God. Hereby God is glorified, more than he would have been if Adam had never fallen, or if all mankind had perished under the ruins

of sin, Joh. 17:4. All the moral perfections of the Deity are illustriously displayed and glorified in the salvation of sinners, through Jesus Christ. His wisdom appears conspicuous in contriving the plan; his power, in effecting it; his love, in giving his own Son; his justice, in punishing him; his mercy, in pardoning sinners; and his holiness in cleansing them from sin in his Son's blood. The angels, at the Redeemer's birth, sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." And all the ransomed of the Lord will praise God for this wonderful scheme of salvation, to all eternity.

Second, With regard to the law of God. The mediatorship of Christ hath restored to the law all its rights and honors; for he hath magnified the law and made it honorable, by yielding a perfect obedience to it, and dying to make satisfaction for the breach of it.

Third, With regard to man, the blessed effects of Christ's mediatorship are scarce to be enumerated.

1. Hereby that desirable blessing peace, lost by sin, is restored to all the people of God. Christ is "the Prince of peace," Isa. 9:6. His covenant is a covenant of peace, Isa. 54:10. His gospel is the gospel of peace, Rom. 10:15. And this blessing he bequeathed to his people as a legacy, Joh. 14:27.

(1.) Through him they have peace with God, Rom. 5:1. Of him it is said, "This man shall be the peace," i. e. the peace-maker, Mic. 5:5; and "he hath made peace by the blood of his cross," Col. 1:20.

(2.) They have peace of conscience, "joy and peace in believing," Rom. 15:13. Their hearts being sprinkled from an evil or guilty conscience, they enjoy great peace within.

(3.) They have peace one with another, Mar. 9:50. Being all one in Christ, their hearts are knit together in love, Gal. 3:28; Col. 2:2. The enmity betwixt Jews and Gentiles is removed, and they are united together in one body; "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us," Eph. 2:13.

2. Pardon of sin is another effect of Christ's mediatorship. God, for Christ's sake, forgives his people, Eph. 4:32. The blood of Christ was shed to make an atonement for, and obtain the remission of our sins; and God "is faithful and just to forgiving us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness," 1Jn.

1:9.

3. Justification is also through the mediatorship of Christ, "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." Isa. 45:25. The righteousness of Christ, as mediator, is the sole matter and cause of a sinner's justification before God, Rom. 5:17-18. This righteousness Christ wrought out by his active and passive obedience to the law; and by it, "all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses," Act. 13:39.

4. Adoption is likewise through the mediation of Christ, and on account of what he hath done and suffered for us. He was "made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law; that we might receive the adoption of sons," Gal. 4:4-5. By this act of divine grace, we are received into the family of God, as his dear children; and are favored with the grace and "spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father;" being "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ," and so entitled to all the blessings and privileges of the sons of God, Rom. 8:15-17.

5. Through the mediation of Christ we enjoy the renewing, comforting, and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. He was a party concerned in the covenant of grace, of which Christ is the Mediator: and he is sent by Christ to convince the world of Sin, renew the soul, comfort the people of God, sanctify and make them meet for heaven, Joh. 16:8; Tit. 3:5; Heb. 12:14.

6. All the blessings and privileges of the gospel come flowing to us through the mediation of Christ. The gospel itself is his gospel, Rom. 15:20. The doctrines of it are his doctrines; they treat of his person, offices, grace, blood, and righteousness. The promises, which are exceeding great and precious, "are all yea and amen, in Christ," 2Pe. 1:4; 2Cor. 1:20. Gospel ordinances were instituted by Christ, and represent, the one, his death, burial, and resurrection; the other, his body broken, and blood shed, for our salvation, Rom. 6:3-4; 1Cor. 11:24-25. In a word, the laws, rules, and discipline of his house, are all good and wholesome, having a tendency to assimilate us to Christ and prepare us for glory.

7. Once more: through the mediation of Christ, we have liberty of access unto God, and are invited to "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need," Heb. 4:16.

8. In fine, eternal life is enjoyed through the mediation of Christ; for,

although heaven is nowhere said to be purchased by Christ, yet sinners are redeemed in order that they may enjoy it. They are "vessels of mercy prepared unto glory," Rom. 9:23. And it is the will of Christ, that all those whom the Father hath given unto him, should be with him, where he is, that they may behold his glory, Joh. 17:24.

Thus, dear brethren, have we endeavored to treat of Christ the Mediator, and we trust that his fulness and suitableness have, in some measure, been made to appear. That you may live to, for, and upon him, and at last live and reign with him, is the prayer of yours in the faith and fellowship of the gospel.

Signed by order of the Association,

OLIVER HART, Moderator.

WM. VANHORN, Clerk.

Chapter IX

Of Free Will

1. God hath indued the Will of Man, with that natural liberty, and power of acting upon choice; that it is *(a)* neither forced, nor by any necessity of nature determined to do good or evil.

(a) Mat. 17:12; Jas. 1:14; Deu. 30:19.

2. Man in his state of innocency, had freedom, and power, to will, and to do that *(b)* which was good, and well-pleasing to God; but yet *(c)* was mutable, so that he might fall from it.

(b) Ecc. 7:29. *(c)* Gen. 3:6

3. Man by his fall into a state of sin hath wholly lost *(d)* all ability of Will, to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, *(e)* and dead in Sin, is not able, by his own strength, to *(f)* convert himself; or to prepare himself thereunto.

(d) Rom. 5:6; Rom. 8:7. *(e)* Eph. 2:1; Eph. 2:5. *(f)* Tit. 3:1-5; Joh. 6:44.

4. When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of Grace *(g)* he freeth him from his natural bondage under sin, and by his grace alone, enables him *(h)* freely to will, and to do that which is spiritually good; yet so as that by reason of his *(i)* remaining corruptions he doth not perfectly nor only will that which is good; but doth also will that which is evil.

(g) Col. 1:13; Joh. 8:36. *(h)* Php. 2:13. *(i)* Rom. 7:15; Rom. 7:18-19; Rom. 7:21; Rom. 7:23.

5. The Will of Man is made *(k)* perfectly, and immutably free to good alone, in the state of Glory only.

(k) Eph. 4:13.

CIRCULAR LETTER

Philadelphia Baptist Association

"The Freedom of Man's Will"

By Rev. Samuel Jones, A.M., Pastor

Pennepek Baptist Church

1783

The elders and brethren of the several churches, met in Association at Philadelphia, October 21 st, 1783.

To the several churches to which we relate, send greeting.

Dearly beloved, -- Through the kind indulgence of a gracious God, we met according to appointment. We have been favored, as usual, with peace and harmony, during the whole of our consultations, for which we call on you to join us in giving glory to the Head of the church.

For the result of our deliberations, together with the good tidings we received from different parts, we refer to the minutes of our proceedings, which we herewith send you.

The point of doctrine, which, according to our order, comes next under consideration, is, the freedom of man's will. Confession of faith, Chapter IX.

The inquiry concerning the liberty of the will is, whether man, as a moral agent, acts freely, without any restraint or constraint. That he should act thus freely, without any coercive force on the will, is necessary, in order to his being a free agent, or the subject of moral government. For if he acted under constraint, as his actions would not be free, they could not be charged to him, as virtuous or vicious, but must be placed to the account of that being, under whose influence he acted. So essential is it to the cause of morality to support the liberty of the will.

How it can be that the decrees of God, and the superintendence of Providence, do not interfere with this freedom and liberty of the will, is what renders the subject difficult; and it will, perhaps, remain in some measure inexplicable, until we arrive to a state of a more free and clear exercise of our mental powers, and a greater perfection in knowledge.

That there is a Divine Providence is as certain and necessary, as that there is a God: and that the Divine Being governs and sustains the universe, as that he made it.

Nor is there much difficulty in admitting and conceiving this precedence of the Deity among the orders of inanimate nature; nor yet with regard to moral agents, so far as respects good actions; but how far the divine agency is versant about evil actions, is one of the most perplexing inquiries in the whole compass of theology.

Nevertheless, that the providence of God has a concern in evil actions is clear, not only from what we have suggested above, but also from those Scriptures following, on which no consistent meaning can be put, without admitting that superintendence of the divine Being, of which we are speaking.

Joseph, addressing his brethren concerning their selling him into Egypt, tells them, that it was not they that sent him thither, but God. Gen. 14:8. And God is said to harden Pharaoh's heart. Exo. 4:21. The same is also said of Sihon, king of Hesbon. Deu. 2:30. And David, speaking of Shimei's cursing him, says, that God had bid him. 2Sa. 16:10.

By these, and such like passages, it is clear that the providence of God is some how conversant even about evil actions; but we know it must be in such a way as that he is neither the author nor approver of sin; and it may be in these ways following:

1. By causing the object to be presented, which, through the corruptions of our nature, may be the occasion of sin; as in the case of Joseph and his brethren, David and Shimei. Now all this may be, and yet the Supreme Disposer of all things perfectly clear; for the presentation of the object does not lay a necessity of sinning, nor is the object presented with a view to occasion the sin. Thus our blessed Lord, a little before his crucifixion, knew that his going to Jerusalem at that time would prove the occasion, by presenting the object, of his being apprehended and crucified. But he did not go thither with that view; nor did his going, or his knowing what they would do, lay them under a necessity of doing it.

2. It may be in suffering and permitting sin, not in suggesting it, or influencing to it, as the Apostle James, speaks: "Let no man say, when he is tempted, that he is tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts and enticed," Jas. 1:13-14.

3. The providence of God is conversant about evil actions, in overruling them

to his own glory, as in the case of Joseph, just now mentioned; but especially the fall of man, and the sufferings of our Redeemer.

It may further be of use, in considering this subject, to distinguish between what is natural and what is sinful in an action; the former being from God, but the latter from ourselves. Thus the power of speech, and the faculties of the mind are from God, but the misuse and abuse of those powers and faculties to the purposes of blasphemy, and the like, must be from the corruptions of our own hearts. This is illustrated by an apt similitude, taken from the sun's drawing forth vapors from the earth, by that heat, which has a tendency to exhale them; but the stench that attends what is exhaled from a dunghill, or any putrid substance, is not owing to the sun, but the nature of the substance from whence it is drawn.

In the chapter referred to above, the free agency of man is applied to his fourfold state.

1. The state of innocence; concerning which there is no difficulty except the decree, which affects all states and actions alike.
2. His fallen state; wherein man is naturally inclined and prone to that which is evil, but averse to that which is good. Now, in conversion, the operations of grace do not offer violence to the will; but the understanding is enlightened, and a discovery is made to the creature of his awful situation in a state of sin and guilt, in consequence of which, sin is embittered, the attention is turned to the spiritual concern of the soul, the desire is excited after pardon, and thus is wrought in him to will and to do, and he is made willing in the day of God's power.
3. The state of man after conversion, wherein he is actuated by a two-fold principle; the remains of nature, and the principle of grace: as the apostle speaks, Rom. 7:15, Rom. 7:24. Concerning the first there is no difficulty, and the other operates much after the same manner as in conversion, explained above.
4. And *lastly*, the state of glory, wherein the inclination will only be to that which is good, which, however, is not inconsistent with freedom, but is the perfection of it, as in the Divine Being himself, since liberty consists in freedom to follow, the desire, while it is confined within the limits of the agent's power.

As for the inference of the decree with the liberty of which we are speaking, if it be hard to conceive how it should not, so, let it be remembered, it is as hard to conceive how it should. The blessed Jesus, for instance, is said to be delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, Act. 2:23. But what influence could this fore-knowledge have on the Jews, who were not conscious of it, and never adverted to it in all their proceedings, but acted freely, according to the natural course of their wicked inclinations, even those vile affections of malice, hatred, selfishness, envy, and the like, they were actuated by.

Thus, dear brethren, we have brought to your view, and briefly explained this abstruse subject, so far as the nature of it, and the narrowness of our limits would admit.

You see three things are certain:

1st, The decrees and providence of God:

2dly, That he is neither the author nor approver of sin: yet,

3dly, That man is a free agent.

And if there be any difficulty in perceiving the agreement between the first and the last, yet not near so great as to reject all three, or either of them. It is not necessary we should know every thing. There are mysteries in nature as well as in providence and grace. We should beware of picking the lock, as one expresses it, of which the key is not in our keeping. It becomes us rather humbly to adore that God, who does all things well, Mar. 7:37; but gives account of his matters to none, Job. 13:1; and be thankful for that wonderful and all-sufficient discovery of divine truth, that has been made. Let us use diligence in improving those discoveries to the glory of God, and our own advancement in grace, that we may be built up in faith and holiness. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

JOHN GANO, Moderator.

THOMAS USTICK, Clerk.

Chapter X

Of Effectual Calling

1. Those whom God hath predestinated unto Life, he is pleased in his appointed, and accepted time, *(a)* effectually to call by his word, and Spirit, out of that state of sin, and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and Salvation *(b)* by Jesus Christ; inlightning their minds, spiritually, and savingly to *(c)* understand the things of God; taking away their *(d)* heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his Almighty power determining them *(e)* to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come *(f)* most freely, being made willing by his Grace.

(a) Rom. 8:30; Rom. 11:7; Eph. 1:10-11; 2Th. 3:13-14. [It appears that the reference to 2Th. 3:13-14 in the original manuscript is an error. Most modern editions have 2Th. 2:13-14, which seems more relevant.] *(b)* Eph. 2:1-6. *(c)* Act. 26:18; Eph. 1:17-18. *(d)* Eze. 36:26. *(e)* Deu. 30:6; Eze. 36:27; Eph. 1:19. *(f)* Psa. 110:3; Son. 1:4.

2. This Effectual Call is of God's free, and special grace alone, *(g)* not from any thing at all foreseen in man, nor from any power, or agency in the Creature, coworking with his special Grace, *(h)* the Creature being wholly passive therein, being dead in sins and trespasses, until being quickned & renewed by the holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the Grace offered and conveyed in it; and that by no less *(i)* power, then that which raised up Christ from the dead.

(g) 2Ti. 1:9; Eph. 2:8. *(h)* 1Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:5; Joh. 5:25. *(i)* Eph. 1:19-20.

3. Elect Infants dying in infancy, are *(k)* regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit; who worketh when, and where, and *(l)* how he pleaseth: so also are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the Ministry of the Word.

(k) Joh. 3:3; Joh. 3:5-6. *(l)* Joh. 3:8.

4. Others not elected, although they may be called by the Ministry of the word, *(m)* and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet not being effectually drawn by the Father, they neither will, nor can truly *(n)* come to Christ; and therefore cannot be saved: much less can men that receive not the

Christian Religion (*o*) be saved; be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the Law of that Religion they do profess.

(*m*) Mat. 22:14; Mat. 13:20-21; Heb. 6:4-5. (*n*) Joh. 6:44-45; Joh. 6:65; 1Jn. 2:24-25. (*o*) Act. 4:12; Joh. 4:22; Joh. 17:3.

CIRCULAR LETTER

Philadelphia Baptist Association

"Effectual Calling"

By Rev. John Gano, Pastor

First Baptist Church, New York City

1784

The elders and brethren of the several churches, met in Association at New York, October 5th, 6th, and 7th, 1784.

To the churches with whom we are connected, send greeting:

Dearly beloved—The preceding minutes will give you every necessary information relative to our meeting, the state of our churches, and our endeavors for their prosperity. We trust, you will unite your efforts with ours, to the same good purpose; and that our thanksgivings for the present peace, harmony, and increase of our churches, our prayers for their further growth, with a more powerful effusion of the Divine Spirit and grace upon them, will be mutually offered up. May the consideration of our effectual calling prove an incentive thereunto! Which is the subject now to be considered, as in the tenth chapter of our Confession of faith.

That we may investigate this subject as fully as the limits of a letter will allow, we will consider,

- I. first, the call;
- II. secondly, the Author of the call;
- III. thirdly, the called; and
- IV. fourthly, its efficacy.

I. *The call.* This is an act of sovereign grace, which flows from the everlasting love of God, and is such an irresistible impression made by the Holy Spirit upon the human soul, as to effect a blessed change. This impression or call is sometimes immediate, as in the instance of Paul and others; though more ordinarily through the instrumentality of the word and providence of God. Though in both the impression or power upon the soul or rational principle of operation must be the same. This may be considered as one power capable of exerting itself in various modes; as in perceiving, choosing, refusing, loving, hating, &c. Likewise the impression before mentioned may be viewed as one spiritual principle of operation in the soul, exerting itself in

divers ways, rather than as different principles of grace.

II. *We are to consider the Author of the call.* The Author is God, the Father, Son, and Spirit. As in 1Th. 2:12, "That ye walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory." Also, in 2Ti. 1:9, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace," &c. In others it more directly applies to the Father, who is said to call them unto the fellowship of his Son. Sometimes it is ascribed to the Son, as in Pro. 1:20, Proverbs 8, where saints are said to be called of Jesus Christ. Lastly, it is ascribed to the Holy Ghost, as in Php. 1:6; "Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Upon the whole this call is heard as it is in deed and in truth, the call of God, and not the voice of man.

III. *We are to consider who are the called.* They are such as God hath chosen and predestinated both to grace and glory, elected and set apart in Christ, as redeemed by his blood, although by nature children of wrath even as others; not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. This is an holy, heavenly, and, consequently, an high calling.

IV. *Its efficacy.* It is effectual to bring the subjects of it to a piercing sense of their guilt and impurity. The mind is deeply convicted, that the fountain is in his very heart or nature, from which all its criminal actions have sprung; and that the lust within disposes us to violate the laws of God in as great a variety of ways as nature is capable of exerting itself, agreeable to Paul's expression, "Sin revived and I died." The soul is affected with a view of its sinfulness and the malignity of sin in its nature, as entirely opposed to the holy law of God; hence arises an abhorrence of sin, as vile and odious, and a sense of its demerit as deserving eternal death. This call produces a consciousness of the absolute impossibility of our contributing in the least degree towards a recovery from this wretched condition, and destroys all confidence of help in the flesh. It is a call to Christ, and gives a view of him in his suitableness and ability as a Saviour; the merit of his obedience and sacrifice, and the treasures of his grace are all brought into view, which creates desires of an interest in him, and resolutions of looking unto and relying wholly upon him for salvation; at the same time cordially acknowledging desert of rejection from him, and yet strengthened to rely entirely upon and surrender all unto the

disposal of Christ; setting to our seals that God is true; believing the record he has given of his Son, which is eternal life, and that this life is in his Son. The changes produced are from darkness to light, from bondage to liberty, from alienation and estrangedness to Christ to a state of nearness and fellowship with him and his saints. This call administers peace of conscience towards God, and disposes its subjects to peace with mankind, so far as is consistent with righteousness.

This is an holy calling, and is effectual to produce the exercise of holiness in the heart, even as the saints are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. God having called us, not to uncleanness, but to holiness, yea, even to glory and virtue, and "to live holily, righteously, and godly in this present evil world;" and to conform us, both as men and as Christians, to the pure dictates of nature and the authority of revelation, in all virtuous actions. To believe what is divinely revealed, and to obey what is divinely enjoined; in which the saints are required to persevere unto "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, which is reserved in heaven for them," and unto which this effectual vocation ultimately tends. From all which considerations, we learn what it is to be both good and great, and that the way to advance in durable riches and righteousness; to live on high; live above the vanities and pomp of this trifling world, and to shame those who walk unworthily, is to retain a sense of our heavenly vocation. Thus will the hearts and hands of all God's people, and especially his ministers, be supported and strengthened; thus will the religion of our adorable Redeemer be honored in the world; thus shall we glorify God in life and enjoy his peace in death, and leave behind a finished testimony that our calling was effectual and our profession sincere.

Signed by order of the Association,

SAMUEL WALDO, Moderator.

WILLIAM VANHORN, Clerk.

Chapter XI

Of Justification

1. Those whom God Effectually calleth, he also freely *(a)* justifieth, not by infusing Righteousness into them, but by *(b)* pardoning their sins, and by accounting, and accepting their Persons as *(c)* Righteous; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone, not by imputing faith it self, the act of beleiving, or any other *(d)* evangelical obedience to them, as their Righteousness; but by imputing Christ's active obedience unto the whole Law, and passive obedience in his death, for their whole and sole Righteousness, they *(e)* receiving, and resting on him, and his Righteousness, by Faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God.

(a) Rom. 3:24; Rom. 8:30. *(b)* Rom. 4:5-8; Eph. 1:7. *(c)* 1Cor. 1:30-31; Rom. 5:17-19. *(d)* Php. 3:8-9; Eph. 2:8-10. *(e)* Joh. 1:12; Rom. 5:17.

2. Faith thus receiving and resting on Christ, and his Righteousness, is the *(f)* alone instrument of Justification: yet it is not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving Graces, and is no dead faith, *(g)* but worketh by love.

(f) Rom. 3:28. *(g)* Gal. 5:6; Jas. 2:17; Jas. 2:22; Jas. 2:26.

3. Christ by his obedience, and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are justified; and did by the sacrifice of himself, in the blood of his cross, undergoing in their stead, the penalty due unto them: make a proper, real and full satisfaction *(h)* to Gods justice in their behalf: yet in asmuch as he was given by the Father for them, and his Obedience and Satisfaction accepted in their stead, and both *(i)* freely, not for any thing in them; their Justification is only of Free Grace, that both the exact justice and rich Grace of God, might be *(k)* glorified in the Justification of sinners.

(h) Heb. 10:14; 1Pe. 1:18-19; Isa. 53:5-6. *(i)* Rom. 8:32; 2Cor. 5:21.

(k) Rom. 3:26; Eph. 1:6-7; Eph. 2:7.

4. God did from all eternity decreeto *(l)* justifie all the Elect, and Christ did in the fulness of time die for their sins, and rise *(m)* again for their Justification; Nevertheless they are not justified personally, until the Holy Spirit, doth in due time *(n)* actually apply Christ unto them.

(*l*) Gal. 3:8; 1Pe. 1:2; 1Ti. 2:6. (*m*) Rom. 4:25. (*n*) Col. 1:21-22; Tit. 3:4-7.

5. God doth continue to (*o*) Forgive the sins of those that are justified, and although they can never fall from the state of (*p*) justification; yet they may by their sins fall under Gods (*q*) Fatherly displeasure; and in that condition, they have not usually the light of his Countenance restored unto them, untill they (*r*) humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith, and repentance.

(*o*) Mat. 6:12; 1Jn. 1:7; 1Jn. 1:9. (*p*) Joh. 10:28. (*q*) Psa. 89:31-33.
(*r*) Psa. 32:5. & Psa. 51:1-19; Mat. 26:75.

6. The Justification of Believers under the Old Testament was in all these respects, (*s*) one and the same with the justification of Believers under the New Testament.

(*s*) Gal. 3:9; Rom. 4:22-24.

CIRCULAR LETTER

Philadelphia Baptist Association

"Justification"

By Rev. William Rogers, Pastor

Philadelphia Baptist Church

1785

The ministers and messenger's of the several Baptist churches, convened in Association, at Philadelphia, October 4, 1785.

To the respective churches, with whom we are connected, send Christian salutation.

Dearly beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ, -- The subject, which we are to address you upon, is contained in Chapter XI. of our Confession of faith, which treats of Justification. A subject truly important! One of the fundamental articles of our holy religion! As such, demands our very particular attention. Therefore, wherein we are obliged, owing to the confined limits of our annual epistle, to study brevity, our hope and expectation is, that you will individually make up such deficiency by serious meditation.

Perspicuity being our aim, we shall,

- I. Explain the term.
- II. Consider the Author.
- III. The objects interested.
- IV. The blessings resulting.

We are,

I. To explain the term. Justification, spiritually or evangelically considered, is a complete acquittal from imputed and contracted guilt; a deliverance from the condemning power of sin; an act of free grace flowing from Jehovah's sovereign good will and pleasure. By many eminent divines this leading doctrine of our creed is viewed as twofold -- eternal and declarative. By the former, we understand that which existed in the divine mind from everlasting, respecting the chosen seed, united with Christ their head, "who hath saved us, according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began," 2Ti. 1:9. By the latter, viz., declarative justification, is designed that which, in time, takes place in or on the conscience of a

believer, commonly styled justification by or through faith. It is upon this, dear brethren, we now address you, this is the light wherein our Confession treats upon it, agreeing herewith, our catechism tells us that "justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone." To be thus fully absolved from all sin and guilt, by virtue of Christ's plenary satisfaction, and pronounced "heirs of eternal life." Oh how enlivening the thought! how animating the reflection! "Bless the Lord, O our souls, and all that is within us, bless his holy name!"

"We come,

II. *To consider the Author of our justification.* In other words from whom it proceeds. Blended with which we must just hint at some of the causes hereof. Educated in the school of Jesus, and instructed by the unerring Spirit of the Most High, you are ready, dearly beloved, to anticipate us under this head, by exclaiming with an inspired apostle, "It is God who justifieth," Rom. 8:33. A Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. A truth this, when viewed in all its parts, calculated to excite not only within us, but amid the angelic choir the highest wonder. "Which things the angels desire to look into," 1Pe. 1:12. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus," Rom. 3:25-26. "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses," Act. 13:38-39. "And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1Cor. 6:11. Many other texts might be quoted, did we not believe you to be already well established in this peculiar excellency of gospel revelation! Nevertheless for our mutual edification, permit us, previous to our dismissal of this head, to mention, with all due conciseness, a few of the causes of our being thus justified or pronounced righteous. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them who have pleasure therein," is of equal force now as when penned by Israel's king. Thus supported, we will not be backward in asserting --

1. That from this main pillar, this sublime characteristic of gospel truth, man's obedience to a law of works is to be utterly excluded. Paul peremptorily says, "By the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in his sight," Rom. 3:20. This single declaration, confirmed by repeated equal testimony, condemns at once every idea of justification by virtue of our own doings. Those who harbor a sentiment so opposed to Jehovah's revealed will, vainly imagine, consistent with themselves, to bring the Supreme Governor of universal nature under obligation to do them good. But, beloved, we have not so learned Christ; we do not wish to rob the blessed Redeemer of the highest diadem in his mediatorial crown; we do not intend thus basely to detract from that glory which peculiarly belongs to the sacred Three-One. "For there is not a just man upon earth, who doeth good and sinneth not," Ecc. 7:20. "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," Isa. 64:6.

2. What is by too many denominated, compliance with gospel terms, we do not admit as having any claim hereunto. Those who cherish this opinion are grossly mistaken. The gospel of our salvation is unconditional: it knows no terms on our part as leading to a justifying righteousness. Faith and repentance are graces bestowed by the Spirit of God, they are blessings flowing from the covenant which is ordered in all things and sure. In fine, regeneration of soul, sanctification of heart, sincerity of disposition, holiness of life, persevering fidelity, undeviating acquiescence in Jehovah's government, steady zeal for Imanuel's interest, all our own pious frames of mind, comfortable feelings, and approving testimonies of conscience, are, with respect to this all-essential doctrine, to be kept totally out of view. To what then is our justification to be ascribed?

We reply,

First, To the mere grace or favor of God as the moving cause, "being justified freely by his grace," Rom. 3:24. "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared; not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us," Tit. 3:4-5. That, which never could have been found out by men or angels, the wisdom of Jehovah contrived and his love hath made known. This is the original source. Here is the fountain from whence all doth spring.

Second, To the life and passion of Jesus as the procuring cause. "But God

commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him," Rom. 5:8-9. He fulfilled every precept, bore the whole penalty of the law in the room and stead of his people. Thus was the law magnified and rendered honorable, an end made of sin, and everlasting righteousness brought in. "And this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS," Jer. 23:6. Oh glorious name! predicted long before his incarnation. Unto whom should we go, but unto our once bleeding but now risen Saviour, for acceptance? For us he drank the bitter cup. It will not do to substitute any thing in the place of this noble sacrifice; it is now a righteous thing with God, freely to justify and abundantly to pardon: "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory, " Isa. 45:25. The robe of Christ's righteousness is a garment down to the foot, wherewith every member of the mystical body is amply covered, "for he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," 2Cor. 5:21. "Such a High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," Heb. 7:26. Should any question, how doth Christ's righteousness, thus consisting of the holiness of his nature, his active and passive obedience, become ours in such wise that we are necessarily deemed righteous too?

We readily Answer --

By imputation; by making it over unto us; reckoning it ours, or placing it to our account, being wrought out by our elder brother on behalf of the whole ransomed flock. "David describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works," Rom. 4:6 Pursuant, therefore, to the unalterable purpose of heaven; agreeable to the economy of man's redemption; this righteousness of the precious Jesus, whereof so many glorious things are spoken, is as much ours as though wrought out by ourselves in our own proper persons; Rom. 5:18-19; Php. 3:8-9. Thus clothed upon with raiment of needlework -- thus united, with the head, how can the members be viewed by God the judge of all but as perfectly and completely justified. "And ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power," Col. 2:10.

Third, Our justification is by some ascribed to faith as an instrumental cause. Strictly speaking, we apprehend faith as no cause at all in this momentous

procedure, but rather as an effect. It is true, the scriptures frequently mention a justification by faith. By such expressions it is evident the object, and not the act, of faith is designed; the object of faith is Christ and his righteousness; this the believing soul lays fast hold on. Faith is the eye which discovers, the hand which receives; espying a Saviour's worth, charmed with his merit, the believer is so enraptured as to cast away all his heavy burden, falls at Messiah's feet, confides in the promise, and pleads atoning blood: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness," Rom. 10:10. It is beautifully noticed by one of our very first and most orthodox writers. "The reason why any are justified is not because they have faith; but the reason why they have faith is because they are justified." If justified faith as a work performed by us or a grace wrought within us; where would have been the necessity of the death and resurrection of Jesus? Faith is that precious grace, by which we do in a certain manner put on the righteousness of the Lord's anointed, and receive the greatest of all blessings from the God of our salvation. "It is grace (saith one) which quarrels much with human pride and makes its only boast of Sharon's rose; and never was meant to be our justifying righteousness in the sight of God, else it would learn to boast." Faith says, "In the Lord have I righteousness;" and tells a sinner, "I cannot save thee; thou art saved by grace through faith." The grace of Jesus, and that alone brings salvation; and the sinner, through faith as an instrument, puts in his hand, is enabled to reach the rich donation; just as a beggar, by his empty cap stretched forth, receives an alms.

We proceed,

III. *To mention the objects interested.* In the examination of this particular, what abundant reason have we to adopt the prophetic language, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isa. 8:20. The persons justified through rich and sovereign grace are, in the living oracles, declared to be "ungodly," Rom. 4:5; also, "sinners," Gal. 2:17. Was it not for declarations like these, where could be our comfort? We are all sinners; we are all ungodly; does it from hence follow, that all who are sinners, all who are ungodly, are without exception justified? By no means! The whole canon of scripture combine with the dictates of sound experience to render every such idea inadmissible! It is true, we read "that by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life," Rom. 5:18. By a careful revision of what goes

before, and follows after, we shall find the apostle did not mean all men absolutely, but all the chosen, all believers; his epistle was directed to "all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints." Moreover, the justified are represented as a peculiar people, and have such characters ascribed to them, as cannot, without the greatest inconsistency and abuse of language, be ascribed to all the progeny of fallen Adam. They are spoken of as those who are predestinated, redeemed, pardoned, effectually called, sanctified, regenerated, &c. That these things are not true, with respect to all the lapsed family, every unprejudiced mind must acknowledge. Upon the whole, those who are unworthy and guilty in themselves, but in the everlasting covenant elected and beloved, have the righteousness whereon their justification is founded, not only exhibited to them by the gospel, but brought nigh by the Holy Ghost; these are the "purchased possession," this is the "bride, the Lamb's wife;" between whom and the Lord Jesus, an union not only now exists but hath existed, ancient as eternity itself. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee," Jer. 31:3. A multitude which no man can number.

IV. The last thing proposed for investigation, we now hasten to unfold; viz: *the blessings resulting here-from.*

Where, dear brethren, shall we begin, and how shall we end; blessings great indeed crowd in upon us! blessings beyond compare are consequential on our being thus freely justified! a doctrine pregnant with comfort inexpressible; a foundation is hereby laid not simply for fluctuating hope, but for the full assurance of present and of future bliss. By virtue hereof, we experience:

1. A freedom or deliverance from sin and condemnation. From all sin, as to its guilt from its reigning power and dominion, and by and by from its in-being: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin," 1Jn. 1:7; Heb. 10:12-14. Our sins are covered and hid from the all penetrating eye of divine justice, and when sought for hereafter shall not be found. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus," Rom. 1:1; Gal. 3:13. When seriously reflecting on our happy rescue from the hands of Satan, our accusing foe; also from death and the grave, as penal evils: but more especially from the pains of hell and the wrath to come, and all as the effect of love divine! what heart among us can remain cold and lifeless? what tongue among us can cease to praise?

2. As justified, we enjoy peace with God. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," Rom. 5:1; connected herewith is real peace of mind! Oh, happy souls! brought fully to behold a crucified Redeemer making peace by the blood of his cross: "The chastisement of our peace was upon him," Isa. 53:5. Knowing this to be the case, well may we, "on the dove-like wings of faith, fly far away from the storms and tempests of an opposing conscience, and find in the Rock of Ages a quiet sanctuary and safe retreat."

3. The acceptance of our persons and services is another blessing resulting herefrom. The Father is well pleased with both for the alone sake of Christ his Son, "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved," Eph. 1:6. Christ's garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, wherewith his people being clad, the Lord smells a sweet smell in them also. A view of this emboldens us to draw near to the King of kings, Heb. 10:19-22. The person, the blood, the righteousness, the mediation of Jesus are the only foundation of all our pleas at the celestial throne.

4. As justified we are blessed through life, shall be so at death, yea, throughout eternity. While on earth, we are expressly assured that "all things work together for our good;" when summoned to die, we need not fear the grim messenger. The property of temporal death with respect to God's people is greatly changed; it puts an end to all their sorrow, hath its sting taken away, and will prove to be our very great gain. In honor and triumph are such conveyed to the mansions above, and oh! with what joy are the everlasting doors expanded wide for their reception. Our bodies, though mouldered to dust, will nevertheless enjoy a glorious resurrection -- our persons, at the last day, an honorable distinction and gracious approbation from the Judge supreme; never ceasing felicity, consummate happiness, and perpetual glory will be our portion. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them who love him," 1Cor. 2:9. We shall then, oh joyful period! live and reign with Christ for ever and ever, and our song will uninterruptedly be, "Unto him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us priests and kings unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever," Rev. 1:5-6. Justification and glorification are closely connected; they go, as it were, hand in hand, Rom. 5:8, Rom. 5:10; Rom. 8:30.

Having thus endeavored to explain this leading article of the Christian faith, we shall now close our address with such inferences as appear easily deducible therefrom.

1. Hereby we are taught the futility of opinions which, however remotely, lead to self dependence. Justification either by our own external performances or any inherent holiness whatever, are sentiments fully exploded by all who are acquainted with the truth as it is in Jesus: we are justified in such a way as excludes, in every sense, all boasting in ourselves. "Where is boasting, then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay; but by the law of faith," Rom. 3:27.

2. The necessity of highly prizing that righteousness which is revealed in the gospel, as the only foundation of genuine hope and solid joy. This righteousness as hath been proved, is the alone matter of our justification in Jehovah's sight; a righteousness which was devised and provided for us by the Father; wrought out for us by the Son, and now made over unto us by the Holy Ghost; a righteousness perfect and divine, wherewith justice is satisfied, the law magnified, the Triune glorified, and grace, superabounding grace displayed. To exhibit this righteousness, to elucidate its worth, to inform us of the peculiar happiness of those to whom it is imputed, is the main design both of the Old and New Testaments. May we, therefore, "search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of Immanuel, God with us."

We also --

3. From hence, learn that the standing of all who are justified is secure indeed. To fall therefrom is utterly impossible. How can such come into condemnation, or be made partakers of the second death? They cannot; the righteousness of the Mediator is an everlasting righteousness. This being the sole ground of our confidence, it evidently follows that our abiding is safe; the believer can never lose his interest therein; the act which justifies is in itself unalterable; it is coeval with the eternal covenant; the benefit thereof is insured, and will for ever be enjoyed by us. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord," Isa. 54:17. The love wherewith we are loved, the grace wherewith we are visited, will endure unto the end.

"For Christ in every age has prov'd,
His purchase firm and true;
If this foundation be removed,
What shall the righteous do?"

Is it then, dearly beloved brethren, as hath been represented? Supported by the unerring volume, we think this question may be fully answered in the affirmative. What improvement, then, ought we to make of so essential a part of truth divine? Examine yourselves. Have you any solid reason whereon to ground your belief that you are the objects interested? Admire then the grace of God, in imputing to you righteousness so complete; rejoice therein, and have no confidence in the flesh; ascribe the whole of your finished salvation to Jehovah's boundless love; sing, in humble notes, the church's song, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake," Ps. 115.

1. Live near to God, to whose unmerited favor alone you are indebted for a translation from surrounding darkness into marvellous and stupendous light. The doctrine of justification, when rightly viewed, unavoidably leads to strict holiness both in life and conversation. Evidence, then, by your constant fruit, that you are the called of God in Christ, Jesus; persevere in the discharge of every duty. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid. Yea, we establish the law," Rom. 3:31. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them," Eph. 2:10. Be not discouraged, though you have foes without and foes within. Greater is he who is for us, than all those who are against us. Owing to indwelling corruption and pride of heart, we too often offend the best of Beings; for our consolation it is recorded, "If we forsake his law, and walk not in his judgments; if we break his statutes, and keep not his commandments, then will he visit our transgressions with a rod, and our iniquities with stripes. Nevertheless, his loving kindness will he not utterly take from us, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail," Psa. 89:30-33. See also Isa. 54:7-8. Chastised we may be with the rod of a father, but not with the wounds of an enemy. "What though your afflictions are great? there is no wrath in the portion of your cup; though men should condemn you, God will not; though devils accuse you, they shall not prevail."

How honored are the subjects of Jehovah's grace! By far more dignified than

the angels who never sinned! Frequently call to mind that celestial anthem, which, through eternity, will be chaunted [sic] on the highest key by all the redeemed throng; "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing," Rev. 5:12. You can never think enough of Christ and his righteousness; let this then be your constant theme.

"Some this, some that good virtue teach,
To rectify the soul;
But we first after Jesus reach,
And richly grasp the whole."

To conclude.

The doctrine of justification, the subject treated upon in this letter, being a doctrine so infinitely momentous, we do, with all Christian affection, as members of the same body with you, recommend it to the serious and candid perusal of all. A doctrine, we trust, wherein our associated churches are firmly established; for wherever the gospel is purely preached, this doctrine must necessarily not only make a part, but a distinguished part thereof. That the light of divine truth may emit its rays in such wise, as to dispel every gloom and all the mists of error; that soundness in every article of our orthodox faith may be restored among, and contended for, by all God's children, wherever dispersed; that the good word of the kingdom may run to and fro and be abundantly glorified, even from the rising to the setting sun; that whenever it is dispensed it may be accompanied with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power; finally, that the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, may visit all our borders, is, dear brethren, the unfeigned wish and cordial prayer of yours, in the best of bonds.

By order of the Association,

OLIVER HART, Moderator.

WILLIAM ROGERS, Clerk.

Chapter XII

Of Adoption

1. All those that are justified, God vouchsafed, in, and for the sake of his only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the Grace *(a)* of Adoption; by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the Liberties, and *(b)* Priveledges of Children of God; have his *(c)* name put upon them, *(d)* receive the Spirit of Adoption, *(e)* have access to the throne of Grace with boldness, are enabled to cry Abba, Father, are *(f)* pitied, *(g)* protected, *(i)* provided for, and *(k)* chastned by him, as by a Father; yet never *(l)* cast off; but sealed *(m)* to the day of Redemption, and inherit the promises, *(n)* as heirs, of everlasting Salvation.

(a) Eph. 1:5; Gal. 4:4-5. *(b)* Joh. 1:12; Rom. 8:17 *(c)* 2Cor. 6:18; Rev. 3:12. *(d)* Rom. 8:15. *(e)* Gal. 4:6; Eph. 2:18 *(f)* Psa. 103:13. *(g)* Pro. 14:26. *(i)* 1Pe. 5:7. *(k)* Heb. 12:6. *(l)* Isa. 54:8-9; Lam. 3:31. *(m)* Eph. 4:30. *(n)* Heb. 1:14; Heb. 6:12.

Circular Letter
Philadelphia Baptist Association
"Adoption"
By Rev. Thomas Ustick, Pastor
Philadelphia Baptist Church
1786

The elders and brethren of the several Baptist churches, convened in Association, at Philadelphia, October 3d, 1786.

Send Christian salutation to the churches with whom we are united. Dearly beloved, -- The present meeting has afforded us an opportunity of hearing the most agreeable tidings from some of our churches, which convince us, that "God is waiting to be gracious" and "ever mindful of his covenant." Jer. 33:1, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." And again, 2Cor. 6:18, "I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." We are daily realizing the accomplishment of these divine promises. It is, therefore, with peculiar pleasure, that we now address you on the interesting and glorious subject of Adoption. See Confession of faith, Chap. XII.

The adoption of a person into a family imports, that previous to that transaction he did not bear the relation of a child in that family; and therefore could have no claim to the distinguishing name, peculiar titles, proper estates, or special interests of the family. He may, indeed, be an alien, or an enemy, and yet become an adopted son. Because the act, which constitutes him a son in a law sense, entirely depends upon the will of the adopter. Spiritual adoption may be defined, as the sovereign or authoritative act of God's grace, by which persons are translated from the family of Satan into the family of God: and being put among the children are justly entitled to all the privileges of a divine and everlasting inheritance.

When we consider that it is said of God, "that he calleth those things which be not as though they were," we shall readily perceive that the decree of adoption has its date in eternity; but the manifestation or execution of the decree in time, at different periods, with respect to individuals, by the spirit of adoption; and at the consummation of time, with respect to the collective mystical body of Christ, by the resurrection. This distinction is purely

scriptural. The decree, moving cause, and end, are all comprehended in Eph. 1:5, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." For as persons may be elected to offices, before they are qualified or invested with power to execute the office; so in the family of God persons are really elected to the state and privilege of sons from eternity. Hence for the accomplishment of this decree we read, Gal. 4:4-5, "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Accordingly, in their conversion they are recognized by Jehovah as sons and daughters, Joh. 1:12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Lastly, the perfect manifestation or consummation of this glorious grace is mentioned, Rom. 8:23, "Waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

Justification and adoption are law phrases. They both have reference to our former condition; and are each in different respects expressive of the important blessings of salvation. No single term could answer the end of fully expressing the nature of our salvation. Different phrases therefore are used to help our conceptions of those blessings, which are ineffable; and for the perfect knowledge of which we must wait, until their consummation in glory.

Justification is a great blessing; but adoption is greater. Justification is the constituting or making a person righteous in the eye of the law; delivering him from every charge of guilt, or obnoxiousness to punishment, and furnishing him with an active righteousness, commensurate to its utmost demands. A justified person then is no longer under condemnation; no longer liable to endure the curse of the law, or the wrath of God. "For we are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ." Thus our progenitors, whilst innocent, were free from every charge of guilt. Wherefore simply to be justified, would be only recovering us from the ruins of the apostacy, and reinstating man in his former dominion, holiness and happiness. This would be grace. It would be free, unmerited grace; and, admitting it to be confirmed, would be infinitely valuable. But who does not see, that the price of our redemption is too precious to be expended in this way, and for no greater end? Here then comes in the necessity of the

superlative grace of adoption; which is necessary to render our state better than it was before -- necessary to raise us above the condition of servants; and to enlarge the expressions of the infinite kindness of God towards the elect; and especially necessary to reward, in an ample and satisfactory manner, the beloved Son of God for the arduous work of our redemption. The persons for whom Christ died, were the objects of his delight from eternity. He could not therefore have been satisfied, that they should be eternally removed from his presence. Observe his own declaration, Joh. 17:24, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." Since, then, by justification we can look back with joy upon the dangers of sin, death, and hell, from which we have escaped; so by adoption we are permitted to look upwards to a state of exalted, permanent, and unalloyed bliss, to which we have an indefeasible right as the sons of God and the bride of Christ.

Adoption may be distinguished likewise from regeneration. By the former we are brought into the relation of children to God; and by the latter we receive the nature, likeness, and image of God. Besides, as we can have no idea of regeneration in a subject, who has not received the filial nature; so we can have no finished idea of adoption in one who has not received the filial spirit. There is that temper or spirit in true believers, which leads them to think and act agreeable to the holy nature of God, and correspondent to the exalted character and dignified relation which they sustain as the children of God. This principle is not natural to man, but is the fruit of the Spirit of God. It is said of the wicked, "that the spirit of disobedience worketh in their hearts." Their condition is servile. The spirit of bondage exercises their minds and governs their conduct. On the other hand, the sons of God are led to action by the spirit of adoption; who moulds and tempers their minds after a divine manner into the image of Christ, 2Cor. 3:18. Hence they are not impelled by the fears of a slave, but are drawn by the cords of love. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father," Rom. 8:15. The Spirit of God, as a spirit of love and obedience to the Father, engaged the immaculate Redeemer, in the actions of his life and sufferings of death, to fulfill all righteousness. This Spirit God giveth not unto him by measure, Joh. 3:34. And we, agreeably to his promise, receive the same holy unction in our measure. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts,

crying, Abba, Father," Gal. 4:6. This Spirit is in all the regenerate sons of God. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God," Rom. 8:14. It is also a Spirit of love. "For everyone that loveth is born of God," 1Jn. 4:7. This love appears to be genuine, when its operations are unconfined and universally extended to all the members of the family of God. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another," Joh. 13:35. Having this Spirit in measure, we shall be able to support the relations which we sustain in the heavenly family; as the sons of God, brethren of Christ, and joint-heirs of the same eternal inheritance, with dignity and delight, in this present life. But when all the sons and daughters of Jehovah have their adoption consummated in a glorious resurrection, they shall then enjoy this Spirit in perfection, as one glorious bride adorned for her husband.

When persons are removed from one family to another by this act of liberality, it is generally supposed, that they make a gainful exchange. Without this prospect, no one would consent to this translation. And, although the consent of the person cannot be obtained, because of non-age or some other impediment; yet the Author of adoption always concludes, that he confers an obligation. And in spiritual adoption the subjects are invariably convinced, that the grace is unspeakably great. Wherefore they can never return to the family of Satan, or heartily espouse the interests of sin. For these realize the truth of that divine declaration, 1Ti. 4:8. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

Many would esteem it a great privilege to be translated from a poor family into one that is rich; but to be saved by this means from impending ruin, from immediate death, must inexpressibly enhance the value of the blessing. Though some might be inclined to despise the idea of dependence, which a change of family implies; yet we conclude, that none would refuse the favor, if death must inevitably follow their refusal. Such was the situation of Moses, according to the narration in chapter second of Exodus. His life was most imminently exposed to destruction, and he must have perished, had not God interposed by his providence for his deliverance. Happy for Moses! happy for the tribes of Israel! that by the disposal of Providence, he fell into the hands of one whose heart was made susceptible of the tender feelings of humanity; and who had it in her power to spare his life, notwithstanding the cruel edict

of the Egyptian king. The adoption of Moses into the royal family, and the preservation of his life, were closely connected. For by this act she not only gave him a new name -- Moses; because, says she, "I drew him out of the water;" and made ample provision for his support and royal education: but she also gave him his life; she rescued him from a double death: from perishing in the waters, and from the sword of barbarous jealousy.

How exactly parallel does this history run with the adoption of sinners into the family of God, who were justly exposed to both the first and second death. He, who is author of all compassion, stretched out his omnipotent arm for their deliverance; and with infinite benevolence says of every subject of redemption, "Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom," Job. 33:24. Thus sparing them as his own children, and even delivering to justice, in the sinner's room, his only begotten Son, that he might place them in the condition of children, and bring them to the inheritance of everlasting glory. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," Joh. 3:16.

In this glorious grace, God appears as our father, and we as his children. Respecting this relation we can have no knowledge, until we are the "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Then we are made to see, "what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God," Eph. 3:9. By this powerful grace we, who are sinners of the gentiles, are authorised to claim all the privileges of the sons of God; being no longer considered as "strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone," Eph. 2:19-20, upon whom the weight of the building rests, and in whom both bodies are united. If therefore we are Christ's, then are we Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. Although the author of the Romans remarks, that "to the Isralites [sic] pertaineth the adoption;" yet he quickly subjoins, "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." Surely this privilege is beyond comparison glorious; that we, who formerly were not considered the Lord's people, should now be called the children of the living God. Not by any alteration of Jehovah's plan; but "according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." For our regeneration,

knowledge of the gospel, faith and repentance, are not only the effects of a prior, but of an everlasting cause, viz., the love of God "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee." Behold and be astonished, brethren, at this stupendous grace. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." We miserable sinners! we presumptuous rebels! we profligate prodigals! we, the avowed enemies of God and godliness, are, by this inestimable grace, denominated "the sons of God." Let the sons of earth boast in their line of famous ancestors; in their near alliance to the great and renowned; yet the pedigree of believers in Jesus is unspeakably more illustrious. Seeing they are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Believers are privileged with peculiar titles and distinguishing names or characters throughout the volume of inspiration; concerning which, we cannot now treat particularly, but would rather refer you to that gracious declaration of him that is holy, of him that is true, in Rev. 3:12, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name."

The privileges which believers enjoy in the militant state of the church are many. If depressed with trials and infirmities, they have a compassionate and almighty Parent to pity and succor them. If, through the remaining power of sin they wantonly transgress, he can and will chastise them: "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth," Heb. 12:6. Wherefore, "O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing," Jer. 10:24. Should the triple host of darkness, the world, the flesh, and the devil, violently attack the souls of believers, almighty power is engaged for their protection. Whilst, therefore, the ears of our omnipotent and gracious Parent are indulgent to our petitions, and whilst "the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered," we may rest assured, that all things will co-operate for the security of our temporal, spiritual, and eternal interests.

"The precious sons of Zion comparable to fine gold," in the present state, are generally "esteemed as earthen pitchers, which men dash in pieces without any regret." The world knoweth us not. Though persecuted with a flood of reproaches and contumely from the mouth of the serpent, the righteous is still

more excellent than his neighbor. God delights to honor him. He is, even in this world, indulged with the best company; regaled with the most delicious entertainments; invested with the highest honors, and adorned with a robe of righteousness, beautiful beyond description. They are honored with His gracious visits, "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." The dear Redeemer is ever with his church. The holy angels minister to the saints; and their mutual society and conversation is heavenly and spiritual. They unitedly feast upon the emblems of Jesus' body and blood at the table of the Lord, where God manifests his love to their souls. All the special ordinances of the house, all the privileges of the church, which Christ has purchased with his blood, are appropriated to the use of believers. The Christian's inventory is most glorious; and comprehensive of all substantial blessings. "For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's," 1Cor. 3:21. Thus, believers are "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." A few more revolving seasons will translate you, the suffering heirs of glory, "to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."

The relative duties incumbent upon us as members of this family, towards God and each other, are many, and cannot now be particularized. In general, let us regard the apostolic exhortation, Eph. 5:1, "Be ye, therefore, followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us." Let us constantly approach the throne of grace with humble confidence, and implore divine assistance, that we may be able to support the profession we have made, with that dignity of conduct, and holiness of conversation, which becomes those who are called to glory and virtue.

Meditate often, brethren, upon that state of permanent bliss which you shall possess in the kingdom of your heavenly Father. Happiness which cannot be perceived by sense nor described by language. See 1Cor. 2:9. Let us realize, therefore, the obligations conferred upon us in this' ineffable blessing of adoption; and acknowledge, for ever acknowledge, with unfeigned gratitude, the riches of his goodness.

"O goodness infinite! goodness immense!
And love that passeth knowledge! Words are vain;
Language is lost in wonders so divine;

Come, then, expressive silence, muse his praise."

Signed, by order of the Association

SAMUEL JONES, Moderator.

THOMAS USTICK, Clerk.

Chapter XIII

Of Sanctification

1. They who are united to Christ, Effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart, and a new Spirit created in them, through the vertue of Christ's death, and Resurrection; are also *(a)* farther sanctified, really, and personally, through the same vertue, *(b)* by his word and Spirit dwelling in them; *(c)* the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, *(d)* and the several lusts thereof, are more and more weakned, and mortified; and they more and more quickened, and *(e)* strengthned in all saving graces, to the *(f)* practice of all true holyness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

(a) Act. 20:32; Rom. 6:5-6. *(b)* Joh. 17:17; Eph. 3:16-19; 1Th. 5:21-23. *(c)* Rom. 6:14. *(d)* Gal. 5:24. *(e)* Col. 1:11. *(f)* 2Cor. 7:1; Heb. 12:14.

2. This Sanctification is *(g)* throughout, in the whole man, yet imperfect *(h)* in this life; there abideth still some remnants of corruption in every part, whence ariseth a *(i)* continual, and irreconcilable war; the Flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh.

(g) 1Th. 5:23. *(h)* Rom. 7:18; Rom. 7:23. *(i)* Gal. 5:17; 1Pe. 2:11.

3. In which war, although the remaining corruption for a time may much *(k)* prevail; yet through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ the *(l)* regenerate part doth overcome; and so the Saints grow in Grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, *(m)* pressing after an heavenly life, in Evangelical Obedience to all the commands which Christ as Head and King, in his Word hath prescribed to them.

(k) Rom. 7:23. *(l)* Rom. 6:14. *(m)* Eph. 4:15-16; 2Cor. 3:18; 2Cor. 7:1.

Circular Letter

"Sanctification"

By Peter P. Vanhorn, Pastor

Salem Baptist Church

1787

The messengers of the several Baptist churches, belonging to the Philadelphia Association, met in the city of New York, October 2d, 3d, 4th, and 5th, 1787.

To the churches to which they are respectively related, greeting.

Dear brethren, -- We beg leave to introduce our circular letter by informing you, that our souls have been refreshed at this meeting, by the glorious tidings brought from different parts, of the advancement of our Redeemer's cause. We congratulate you on this joyful event, portentous, we hope, of the speedy accomplishment of the promises made by the Father to Christ, the King of Zion. As also, on the kind interposition of Divine Providence, visible in that happy union which obtained among the members of the late federal convention, to agree upon and report to the States in this Union, a form of a Federal Government; which promises, on its adoption, to rescue our dear country from that national dishonor, injustice, anarchy, confusion and bloodshed, which have already resulted from the weakness and inefficiency of the present form; and which we have the greatest reason to fear is but the beginning of sorrows, unless the people lay hold on this favorable opportunity offered to establish an efficient government, which, we hope, may, under God, secure our invaluable rights, both civil and religious; which it will be in the power of the great body of the people, if hereafter found necessary, to control and amend.

As we wish you to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we shall address you on the important subject of Sanctification. We are exhorted to contend earnestly for the faith, once delivered to the saints; and as there are some who deny the work of sanctification, and too many who are little acquainted with it, we shall therefore consider the subject in the following order --

- I. We shall explain the term sanctification.
- II. Give some reasons why sanctification is necessary.

III. The happy effects in the subjects of it.

I. In a performance of this nature, brevity must be expected; yet enough may be said to display our sentiments on the subject. By searching the Scriptures, you will find the term hath various significations.

1. It is used to signify the setting apart a person or thing to the peculiar service of God. This is the general use of the word in the Old Testament, and in this sense God is said to sanctify the Sabbath, Gen. 2:3; and to the same purpose it is applied to the first born, Exo. 13:2. Thus the temple, the priests, the altar and sacrifices, were sanctified under the law.

2. It is used for that holiness and purity of nature, which gives us a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light; and, in some respects, may be distinguished from regeneration, though it is radically connected with it. The Apostle, speaking of our salvation, said, "It was not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost," Tit. 3:5.

By washing of regeneration, we understand that great change, which is instantaneously made in us by the power of the Holy Ghost, when we are first made alive in Christ Jesus; and from that period we are new creatures, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. The word is used in the same sense in 1Cor. 6:11, where the Apostle says, "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified." In regeneration, the divine nature is begun in us by the power of the Holy Ghost, and without this work, there can be no growth in grace. From these passages of Scripture, we see that the Holy Ghost makes a distinction between regeneration and sanctification; in regeneration we receive a new nature or principle, and sanctification is the growing of that new nature to the stature of a man in Christ Jesus. The washing of regeneration is never repeated, but the renewing of the Holy Ghost is carried on through the whole life of a Christian, till he ascends to be with Jesus, Php. 1:6. It is the Holy Ghost which begins it, and it is his work to finish it; for in the great plan of salvation, the Holy Spirit is as firmly engaged to begin and finish this work, as the Son of God was to finish the work of redemption assigned him to do. The council of God has ordained this way to make us meet for that state of glory, to which we have a right by the adorable Redeemer's righteousness; and therefore we are said to be "chosen unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit," 2Th. 2:13.

II. We now proceed to demonstrate the necessity of sanctification.

1. We premise, that the necessity of sanctification and regeneration arise from the same cause, the fall of man. This has incapacitated us for communion with God; therefore, notwithstanding all our blessed Redeemer has done, we are represented to be in a lost state till this good work is begun. As sanctification is a progressive work, the necessity of it arises from the consideration that we are at first only babes in Christ, and not complete in holiness; for the best men have a body of sin and death. Every renewed soul must feel this to be his case. The great Apostle groaned under it, and the beloved disciple said, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," 1Jn. 1:8. The Holy Ghost is promised to dwell with us and remain in us as his temple, and ye know the temple of the Lord must be holy. "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

2. Sanctification is necessary, because without it we cannot honor and glorify God. For this our blessed Lord prayed, and for this we should daily apply to the throne of grace, that we may understand the mysteries of his kingdom, and the glory of his grace; that we copy after his great example, and honor him in every dispensation of his providence.

3. It was the great design of Christ's coming into the world; therefore his name is called. Jesus, because he saves his people from the demerit and the pollution of sin; purifymg a peculiar people unto himself, zealous of good works. This great end of the Redeemer's coming shall be fully accomplished in all God's elect by the effectual operations of his Holy Spirit; whose work it is to glorify the Son of God, in applying his benefits to the heirs of glory, and give them a meetness to that inheritance that fadeth not away.

III. We shall now attempt to consider the effects of sanctification.

1. The effects of it appear immediately after regeneration, in a sincere and hearty detestation of sin. The prophet having spoken of a new heart and a new spirit, adds, "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight," Eze. 36:31. No man can loathe himself till he is born of God, because the new man only sees the deformity of sin. After he is turned he truly repents after a godly sort, and is humbled in dust and ashes before God; firmly believing that nothing can deliver him from guilt, but the precious blood of the dear Redeemer.

2. Another effect is, we see more clearly our divorcement from the law, by the satisfaction of Christ, as the way by which life is to be obtained by the believing soul, who, at the same time, honors the law, by acknowledging that it is good, just, and holy. It is the fatal mistake of all in a state of nature, to expect acceptance with God, by the deeds of the law; but the renewed man knows that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth. The great Apostle says, "I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." What a display of infinite wisdom in the plan of salvation! Here we see the sinner saved by grace, flowing consistent with all the perfections of God, and, at the same time, maintaining the honor of the divine law. Vain are the expectations of all who separate what God has joined together. Preserve divine truth in its own order, and it is glorious and harmonious. In the great plan of salvation, God joined together justification by the righteousness of Christ, imputed unto us by an act of grace, by which we have a right to eternal life, and sanctification, which gives us a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. One great error in religion is, separating what God has joined together, and joining together what God has separated. Beware of all who applaud the imputed righteousness of Christ, and, at the same time, either deny the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification, or speak lightly or reproachfully of it. He, therefore, who would either verbally or doctrinally exclude the imputed righteousness of Christ, and, at the same time, make great professions of holiness and zeal for religion, ought to be considered as an inveterate enemy to the blessed Redeemer and his truth.

Now, dear brethren, we take our leave of you, by entreating you to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called. Watch over one another in love; in humility, seek spiritual growth to glorify your heavenly Father, and appear as lights in the world. May the God of all grace sanctify you wholly, and preserve you blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

JAMES MANNING, Moderator.

WILLIAM VANHORN, Clerk.

Chapter XIV

Of Saving Faith

1. The Grace of Faith, whereby the Elect are enabled to beleive to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ *(a)* in their hearts; and is ordinarily wrought by the Ministry of the *(b)* Word; by which also, and by the administration of Baptisme, and the Lords Supper, Prayer and other Means appointed of God, it is increased, *(c)* and strenghtned.

(a) 2Cor. 4:13; Eph. 2:8. *(b)* Rom. 10:14; Rom. 10:17. *(c)* Luk. 17:5; 1Pe. 2:2; Act. 20:32.

2. By this Faith, a Christian believeth to be true, *(*)* whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the Authority of God himself; and also apprehendeth an excellency therein, *(d)* above all other Writings; and all things in the world: as it bears forth the Glory of God in his Attributes, the excellency of Christ in his Nature and Offices; and the Power and Fullness of the Holy Spirit in his Workings, and Operations; and so is enabled to *(e)* cast his Soul upon the truth thus beleived; and also acteth differently, upon that which each particular, passage thereof containeth; yeilding obedience to the *(f)* commands, trembling at the *(g)* threatnings, and embracing the *(h)* promises of God, for this life, and that which is to come: But the principal acts of Saving Faith, have immediate relation to Christ, accepting, receiving, and resting upon *(i)* him alone, for Justification, Sanctification, and Eternal Life, by vertue of the Covenant of Grace.

()* Act. 24:14. *(d)* Psal. 19:7-10; Psal. 119:72. *(e)* 2Ti. 1:12. *(f)* Joh. 15:14. *(g)* Isa. 66:2. *(h)* Heb. 11:13. *(i)* Joh. 1:12; Act. 16:31; Gal. 2:20; Act. 15:11.

3. This Faith although it be different in degrees, and may be weak, *(k)* or strong; yet it is in the least degree of it, different in the kind, or nature of it (as is all other saving Grace) from the Faith, *(l)* and common grace of temporary beleivers; and therefore though it may be many times assailed, and weakned; yet it gets *(m)* the victory; growing up in many, to the attainment of a full *(n)* assurance through Christ, who is both the Author *(o)* and finisher of our Faith.

(k) Heb. 5:13-14; Mat. 6:30; Rom. 4:19-20. *(l)* 2Pe. 1:1. *(m)* Eph. 6:16; 1Jn. 5:4-5. *(n)* Heb. 6:11-12; Col. 2:2. *(o)* Heb. 12:2.

Circular Letter

"Saving Faith"

By Rev. David Jones, Pastor
Southampton Baptist Church
1788

The messengers of the Baptist churches, belonging to the Philadelphia Association, met in the city of Philadelphia, October, 7th, 1788.

To the churches with whom they are connected, greeting;

Beloved brethren, -- The great design of our annual meeting is to promote the welfare of the church of Christ, by giving our advice in difficult cases, and by the use of every other means, to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. To accomplish this end, it has been thought expedient to select a chapter of our Confession of faith annually, to be the foundation of our circular letter. That which comes under consideration this year, is the doctrine of Saving Faith, continued in the fourteenth chapter.

By such, as have wished to suit their definitions to carnal minds, the subject has been rendered very abstruse; but divine truth is plain and easy to them who are taught of God, and have learned of Christ to be meek and lowly in heart, believing all things contained in the holy scriptures.

The method in which we propose to treat the subject shall be,

I. First. To explain what we mean by saving faith.

II. Second. To give some distinguishing properties, or marks, of this precious grace.

I. It has been the custom of divines, in ages past, to use the word saving, when treating of this grace; hence it is probable, some have been led to suppose that this grace had something in it so meritorious as to justify the subject before God, at least in a conditional sense; but who ever reads our Confession of faith, will find that we exclude any such meaning, and only use the word to distinguish true faith from that kind, which is found in unregenerate men and devils. Saving faith may be thus defined, "That grace whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, which is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the word." By this grace the person is enabled to believe all divine truths revealed in the holy scriptures; and in particular to apprehend

the Lord Jesus Christ, and to rely alone on his atoning blood for acceptance in the sight of God. The apostle, speaking of salvation, said, "By grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God," Eph. 2:8. The same apostle informs us that the Ephesians were dead in trespasses and sins, and were by nature the children of wrath even as others; but when the gospel of Christ was preached, the Holy Ghost working with the word, opened their hearts to receive it, and by his powerful operations implanted this grace, by which they were enabled to believe the record that God has given of his Son. The precious grace of faith is a free and sovereign gift of God, conveyed through the power of the Holy Ghost, and the instrumentality of the word; and is co-existent with regeneration, if not an essential part of it; and as it is not of ourselves, we see that all boasting is excluded, so that we may all say, "by the grace of God, we are what we are." When the apostle was enumerating the fruits of the Spirit, he mentions faith as one, Gal. 5:22. This is a truth which everyone, who is born of God, knows, and in substance will acknowledge. We know that this doctrine is too humiliating to carnal hearts, but it is as true as if they believed it; and if it was not so, there would be no true Christians on earth. Blessed be God, he has not left himself without many witnesses in our days, who are willing to confess that they were as unable to believe on the Lord Jesus, as to keep the law of Moses, till God gave them a new heart and a new spirit, through the powerful operations of the Holy Ghost. We will freely acknowledge, therefore, that our faith is through the operation of God, to the praise and glory of his free grace; and in the Psalmist's words, conclude, "Not unto us, O Lord! not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake."

II. We now give some distinguishing properties, or marks, of this precious grace.

1. This faith receives the whole mind of God, and has a due respect to every part of his counsel, when made known to the subject. The language of this grace is, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? It never selects some and rejects other parts of God's will. This grace never wishes any doctrines expressly contained in the Bible, to have been left out. No; as far as it knows the mind of God, so far it obeys. It is a truth to be lamented, that education directs too much the practice of many in the world; but where the voice of this grace is attended to, the person receives the truth in the love of it. The apostle had no exception to any part of the revealed will of God. When he

was before Felix, he said, "But this I confess unto thee, that after the way, which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things, which are written in the law and the prophets, and have hope towards God -- that there shall be a resurrection, both of the just and unjust," Act. 24:14-15. Here is the distinguishing property of this grace, "believing all things." Whether acceptable or not to the Jews or Gentiles, yet his faith believed all things written in the law or prophets, and his hope was according to his faith. The Psalmist could say, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments," Psa. 119:6. Has the Lord requested us to take up our cross and follow him; then, says faith, I will confess him before men. The true Christian is pleased with the whole counsel of God; the way in which he walks is a straight and narrow way, but it is as wide as faith wishes it. Christ is to the unbeliever, a stone of stumbling and rock of offence; but to the believing soul, he is altogether lovely and precious.

2. This faith is not dead and fruitless, it will not allow men to live in sinful ways. The doctrines of grace may be abused to lasciviousness and all manner of ungodliness; but the work of God in the soul, cannot produce such effects. There are many vain talkers in the world, who walk after their own lusts, and speak much of salvation by Christ, and walk according to the course of this world; but where this precious grace is communicated, it is as fire in the soul, which will produce works meet to repentance; hence says the apostle, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision: but faith which worketh by love," Gal. 5:6. There is a faith which works not at all, or it works either out of fear of punishment, or with a view of reward; but this divine grace, which is peculiar to the regenerate, obeys out of love. If there was neither heaven nor hell, the true believer would wish to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. We are taught to pray that the will of God may be done on earth as it is done in heaven, and this is the case when all our obedience flows from love. It is then we serve the Lord our God as the angels in heaven, when all our works originate from love, and our souls are humbled in us, because we serve him no better; we find that when we would do good, evil is present with us, but this leads us to make Christ our all in all.

3. Another distinguishing property, or mark of this grace, is to be dead to the law with respect to our dependence on works for justification before God: we

see that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags after regeneration, as well as before. The apostle said, "Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," Php. 3:8. Faith can bear no other recommendation to God, but the atoning blood of the blessed Jesus: it can admit of no other righteousness, but that which God imputes unto us without works, even the righteousness of the Lamb of God, which can justify us from all things, from which we never could be justified by the law of Moses. Hence we may see that all legal, conditional preaching, is wounding to the souls of true believers, and can answer no other purpose than to support the hope of hypocrites; but when Jesus is represented as bleeding and dying on the cross, to atone for our sins, our languishing hope is quickened, and the soul says, "The life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me," and, O amazing to express! "gave himself for me." The language of faith is, now I can venture into the eternal world, when I behold my bleeding Lord, as the way of acceptance into divine favor. "'Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee!"

Dearly beloved, we have briefly endeavored to explain what we mean by saving faith, and have given some of the distinguishing properties or marks of it; and it has been with this view, to alarm the formalist, and refresh the soul of the sincere, humble Christian, as well as to detect all vain talkers, whose faith is not productive of works agreeable to the gospel of Christ. If you can say, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief;" remember that full assurance is not essential to the being of this grace; and little faith is always attended with fear and doubting. Let the disciple's prayer be yours, "Lord, increase our faith." By it the elders obtained a good report; and as you are partakers of like precious faith, endeavor to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, and "add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love; for if these things be in you, and abound, they will make you to be neither barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: to whom be glory in the church throughout all ages." Amen.

We remain your brethren in the fellowship of the gospel.

Signed, by order of the Association,

SAMUEL JONES, Moderator.

THOMAS USTICK, Clerk.

Chapter XV

Of Repentance unto Life and Salvation

1. Such of the Elect as are converted at riper years, having *(a)* sometimes lived in the state of nature, and therein served divers lusts and pleasures, God in their Effectual Calling giveth them Repentance unto Life.

(a) Tit. 3:2-5.

2. Whereas there is none that doth good, and sinneth *(b)* not; and the best of men may through the power, and deceitfulness of their corruption dwelling in them, with the prevalency of temptation, fall into great sins, and provocations; God hath in the Covenant of Grace, mercifully provided that Beleivers so sinning, and falling, *(c)* be renewed through Repentance unto Salvation.

(b) Ecc. 7:20. *(c)* Luk. 22:31-32.

3. This saving Repentance is an *(d)* evangelical Grace, whereby a person being by the Holy Spirit made sensible of the manifold evils of his sin, doth, by Faith in Christ, humble himself for it, with godly sorrow, detestation of it, and self abhorrence; *(e)* praying for pardon, and strength of grace, with a purpose and endeavour by supplies of the Spirit, to *(f)* walk before God unto all well pleasing in all things.

(d) Zec. 12:10; Act. 11:18. *(e)* Eze. 36:31; 2Cor. 7:11. *(f)* Psa. 119:6; Psa. 119:128.

4. As Repentance is to be continued through the whole course of our lives, upon the account of the body of death, and the motions thereof; so it is every mans duty, to repent of his *(g)* particular known sins, particularly.

(g) Luk. 19:8; 1Ti. 1:13; 1Ti. 1:15.

5. Such is the provision which God hath made through Christ in the Covenant of Grace, for the preservation of Believers unto Salvation, that although there is no sin so small, but it deserves *(h)* damnation; yet there is no sin so great, that it shall bring damnation on them that *(i)* repent; which makes the constant preaching of Repentance necessary.

(h) Rom. 6:23. *(i)* Isa. 1:16; Isa. 1:18; Isa. 55:7.

CIRCULAR LETTER

By Rev. Burgiss Allison

"Repentance unto Life and Salvation"

1789

The elders and messengers of the several churches met in Association at Philadelphia, October 6th, 1789.

To the several churches in union with this Association, send greeting.

Dearly beloved, - Inasmuch as our divine Lord and Master has been pleased, in his infinite mercy, to furnish us with the means of grace, for our furtherance and growth therein; and for the declarative glory of his great and holy name; and as one of these means is the assembling of ourselves together, our predecessors have wisely instituted this annual Association of the churches; that by hearing of the welfare of each other, conferring together upon difficult matters, admonishing, and exhorting to steadfastness in the faith, and addressing each other upon the important doctrines of grace; the Redeemer's cause and interest might be promoted in the world, and Zion built up upon the foundation laid in the gospel. In pursuance of this, in our circular letters, we have addressed you upon those essential doctrines of divine truth; and, for connection sake, have followed the order in which they are treated in our Confession of faith: That which comes next in succession, is Repentance unto life and salvation.

1. By repentance, in general, we understand, sorrow or pain arising from a retrospective view of any action or circumstance, in which we have been agents, which is contrary to, either the dictates of conscience, the word of God; that from whence we see any evil consequences accruing to ourselves, or that which is evil in its own nature, and which is increased in proportion to the light and evidence we have thereof. This repentance may be considered in a two-fold point of view, generally known by the appellations of evangelical and legal. This distinction the apostle seems to have had an eye to, in 2Cor. 7:10, where he tells us, "That godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death." This is indeed implied when we speak of repentance unto salvation, since its distinguishing characteristic, presupposes that there is a repentance which is not unto salvation.

2. The repentance which is not unto life and salvation, or, what is generally

denominated, mere legal repentance, originates in self-love, terminates in the fear of future punishment, or penal evil; and is but a transient view of that legal condemnation which is the consequence of sin: but never leads the soul to the gospel refuge. Hence, if any reformation is effected, it finally terminates in apostacy: Agreeable to the apostle's assertion, 2Pe. 2:22; "But it hath happened unto them, according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

3. Repentance, which is unto life and salvation, has God for its Author; and does not arise from the power of free-will, or the dictates of a natural conscience; but from the grace of God as the efficient, and operation of the divine Spirit as the impulsive cause; without which no means, as judgments, mercies, or the most powerful ministry, of themselves can effect. It is produced in the soul by divine illumination, through which we are led to see something of the nature and perfections of God, the holiness of the divine law, and the strictness of justice. Rom. 7:9, "But when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Hence a discovery of the evil and accursed nature of sin, the pollution and defilement of nature, and the state of condemnation into which the soul is involved. The person is now filled with shame and confusion of face; with sorrow and contrition of soul. He views his heart as a cage of unclean birds, as a nest of pollution and sink of iniquity: and conceives himself to be the most hell-deserving, as well as undeserving of God's creatures, and is made to adopt that lamentable complaint, "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint." This godly sorrow and repentance for sin, is not excited merely from a view of the demerits of sin, of its evil consequences to the soul, or a fear of hell and damnation: but on account of the evil that is in sin; its contrariety to a holy God. He mourns that he has offended God, wounded Christ, and grieved the holy Spirit. It farther produces an ingenuous confession of sin, and forsaking it, in bringing forth fruits meet for repentance in life and conversation.

This is not called repentance unto salvation, as being the cause of salvation, or condition of it; for Christ alone is the fulfiller of the conditions: and, therefore to fit his people for the enjoyment of it, he hath sent forth his Spirit into their hearts, to convince "of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment;" to beget evangelical repentance in them; a hatred to sin, and a turning from it to God. Agreeably to which, it is said, Mat. 1:21, "Thou shalt call his name

Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." But it is said to be unto salvation, as itself is a blessing of salvation and a part of it; an evidence of an interest in it, and terminates in the full enjoyment of it.

This repentance is wrought in the hearts of God's people, as above, in order to their sanctification, that they may be qualified to enjoy the heavenly inheritance.

4. Again, as the Christian experiences the inherence of sin as long as he lives, "for there is none that liveth and sinneth not," though freed from the reigning power and dominion of sin; so he has continued reason to exercise the grace of repentance, and humble himself under every transgression in particular, as well as the remains of corruption in general. Such was the exercise of the apostle, Rom. 7:24, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." Thus is the Christian continually, while in the exercise of grace, aspiring after holiness, and mourning over his depravity. His sanctification is carried on, and will finally be accomplished, when he shall be admitted into the mansions of eternal blessedness and ineffable glory; "where all sorrow and sighing shall flee away;" - where there shall be no more sin, and consequently no need of repentance or sorrow, for the Lord our God "shall wipe away all tears from our eyes."

Thus, dearly beloved, have we endeavored to consider repentance unto life and salvation, according to the gospel sense of the doctrine. May the great Head of his church, through the influence of the divine Spirit, give us a humbling view of all our imperfections, that we may live to the honor of his great name, and ascribe all the glory of our salvation to the riches of his grace, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

OLIVER HART, Moderator.

WILLIAM VANHORN, Clerk.

Chapter XVI

Of Good Works

1. Good Works are only such as God hath (*a*) commanded in his Holy word; and not such as without the warrant thereof, are devised by men, out of blind zeal, (*b*) or upon any pretence of good intentions.

(*a*) Mic. 6:8; Heb. 13:21. (*b*) Mat. 15:9; Isa. 29:13.

2. These good works, done in obedience to Gods commandments, are the fruits, and evidences (*c*) of a true, and lively faith; and by them Believers manifest their (*d*) thankfulness, strengthen their (*e*) assurance, edifie their (*f*) brethren, adorn the profession of the Gospel, stop the mouths of the adversaries and glorifie (*g*) God whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus (*h*) thereunto, that having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end (*i*) eternal life.

(*c*) Jas. 2:18; Jas. 2:22. (*d*) Psa. 116:12-13. (*e*) 1Jn. 2:3; 1Jn. 2:5; 2Pe. 1:5-11. (*f*) Mat. 5:16. (*g*) 1Ti. 6:1; 1Pe. 2:15; Php. 1:11 (*h*) Eph. 2:10. (*i*) Rom. 6:22.

3. Their ability to do good works, is not at all of themselves; but wholly from the Spirit (*k*) of Christ; and that they may be enabled thereunto, besides the graces they have already received, there is necessary an (*l*) actual influence of the same Holy Spirit, to work in them to will, and to do, of his good pleasure; yet are they not hereupon to grow negligent, as if they were not bound to perform any duty, unless upon a special motion of the Spirit; but they ought to be diligent in (*m*) stirring up the Grace of God that is in them.

(*k*) Joh. 15:4; Joh. 15:6. (*l*) 2Cor. 3:5; Php. 2:13. (*m*) Php. 2:12; Heb. 6:11-12; Isa. 64:7.

4. They who in their obedience attain to the greatest height which is possible in this life, are so far from being able to superrogate, and to do more then God requires, as that (*n*) they fall short of much which in duty they are bound to do.

(*n*) Job. 9:2-3; Gal. 5:17; Luk. 17:10.

5. We cannot by our best works merit pardon of Sin or Eternal Life at the hand of God, by reason of the great disproportion that is between them and the glory to come; and the infinite distance that is between us and God,

whom by them we can neither profit, nor satisfy for the debt of our *(o)* former sins; but when we have done all we can, we have done but our duty, and are unprofitable servants; and because as they are good they proceed from his *(p)* Spirit, and as they are wrought by us they are defiled *(q)* and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection that they cannot endure the severity of Gods judgement.

(o) Rom. 3:20; Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 4:6. *(p)* Gal. 5:22-23. *(q)* Isa. 64:6; Psa. 143:2.

6. Yet notwithstanding the persons of Believers being accepted through Christ their good works also are accepted in *(r)* him; not as though they were in this life wholly unblameable and unprovable in Gods sight; but that he looking upon them in his Son is pleased to accept and reward that which is *(s)* sincere although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections.

(r) Eph. 1:6; 1Pe. 2:5. *(s)* Mat. 25:21; Mat. 25:23; Heb. 6:10

7. Works done by unregenerate men although for the matter of them they may be things which God commands, and of good use, both to themselves and *(t)* others; yet because they proceed not from a heart purified by *(u)* faith, nor are done in a right manner according to the *(w)* word, nor to a right end the *(x)* glory of God; they are therefore sinful and cannot please God; nor make a man meet to receive grace from *(y)* God; and yet their neglect of them is more sinful and *(z)* displeasing to God.

(t) 2Ki. 10:30; 1Ki. 21:27; 1Ki. 21:29 *(u)* Gen. 4:5; Heb. 11:4; Heb. 11:6. *(w)* 1Cor. 13:1. *(x)* Mat. 6:2; Mat. 6:5. *(y)* Amo. 5:21-22; Rom. 9:16; Tit. 3:5. *(z)* Job. 21:14-15; Mat. 25:41-43.

Chapter XVII

Of the Perseverance of the Saints

1. Those whom God hath accepted in the beloved, effectually called and Sanctified by his Spirit, and given the precious faith of his Elect unto, can neither totally nor finally fall from the state of grace; *(a)* but shall certainly persevere therein to the end and be eternally saved, seeing the gifts and callings of God are without Repentance, (whence he still begets and nourisheth in them Faith, Repentance, Love, Joy, Hope, and all the graces of the Spirit unto immortality) and though many storms and floods arise and beat against them, yet they shall never be able to take them off that foundation and rock which by faith they are fastned upon: notwithstanding through unbelief and the temptations of Satan the sensible sight of the light and love of God, may for a time be clouded, and obscured from *(b)* them, yet he is still the same *(c)* and they shall be sure to be kept by the power of God unto Salvation, where they shall enjoy their purchased possession, they being engraven upon the palm of his hands, and their names having been written in the book of life from all Eternity.

(a) Joh. 10:28-29; Php. 1:6; 2Ti. 2:19; 1Jn. 2:19. *(b)* Psa. 89:31-32; 1Cor. 11:32. *(c)* Mal. 3:6.

2. This perseverance of the Saints depends not upon their own free will; but upon the immutability of the decree of *(d)* Election flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ *(e)* and Union with him, the *(f)* oath of God, the abiding of his Spirit & the *(g)* seed of God within them, and the nature of the *(h)* Covenant of Grace from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof.

(d) Rom. 8:30; Rom. 9:11; Rom. 9:16. *(e)* Rom. 5:9-10; Joh. 14:19.
(f) Heb. 6:17-18. *(g)* 1Jn. 3:9. *(h)* Jer. 32:40.

3. And though they may through the temptation of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of means of their preservation fall into grievous *(i)* sins, and for a time continue therein; whereby they incur *(k)* God's displeasure, and grieve his holy Spirit, come to have their graces and *(l)* comforts impaired have their hearts hardened, and their Consciences wounded, *(m)* hurt, and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgements *(n)* upon themselves: yet they shall renew their *(o)*

repentance and be preserved through faith in Christ Jesus to the end.

(*i*) Mat. 26:70; Mat. 26:72; Mat. 26:74. (*k*) Isa. 64:5; Isa. 64:9; Eph. 4:30 (*l*) Psa. 51:10; Psa. 51:12. (*m*) Psa. 32:3-4. (*n*) 2Sa. 12:14. (*o*) Luk. 22:32. & Luk. 22:61-62.

Circular Letter
Philadelphia Baptist Association
"Perseverance of the Saints in Grace"
By Rev. William Vanhorn
1791

THE elders and messengers of the several churches met in Association in the city of Philadelphia, October 4th, 1791.

To the churches in union with this Association, send greeting.

Beloved brethren, -- We are happy at the close of this anniversary meeting, to inform you, we have enjoyed an agreeable interview. By communications from the churches, we rejoice to hear that peace is enjoyed so generally, and that to many of them considerable additions have been made. It is matter of much satisfaction, that, in this day of prevailing error, there appears amongst you so general a concern for the preservation of divine truth. From corresponding Associations we have received very agreeable intelligence. On the whole, we have been called upon to very grateful acknowledgments for the goodness and grace of God manifested the year past. But our joys abate, while we reflect on the heavy tidings so generally mentioned in your letters, of the death of our highly esteemed and dearly beloved Brother, DR. MANNING; who, engaged in the dearest interests of religion, of science, and the prosperity of his country, fell from the zenith of glory and usefulness. In the general loss we sustain an important part. No longer shall we enjoy his able counsels, his divine and persuasive eloquence, nor his personal friendship. But while we trust he fell, to rise to higher, to celestial glories, and joys unspeakable, resignation becomes us. May the Lord sanctify to the churches and ministers of Christ, the awful stroke; enable us to feel, and faithfully discharge, the duties devolving on us, and imitate his amiable example.

The subject on which we are now to address you, brethren, is, the Perseverance of the saints in grace, till it shall be consummated in glory. Confession of faith, Chap. XVII.

A doctrine which forms an important article in the system of divine truth, and of which Revelation abounds with evidence; a sentiment calculated to administer the truest spiritual support to the real Christian, to influence him to the warmest zeal for God, and holiness of life.

In treating on this subject, in an epistolary way, it will not be expected to enter at large on what might be said on it, nor formally to encounter all the unreasonable objections which have been raised against it. To convince you of this truth, we trust, dear brethren, there is no necessity. To quicken your graces, and awaken your gratitude, for so divine a support in your Christian race, is chiefly intended.

By asserting the perseverance of the saints in grace, we do not mean to convey an idea, that through the various and powerful oppositions, with which they are beset in this state of spiritual warfare, none of them may fall into sin, be overtaken in transgression, to the wounding of their own souls, the tenderest feelings of their brethren, the churches of Christ, the interests of religion in general, and the displeasure of God, -- but, that through this unspeakable grace and mercy he will not suffer them so to fall, and continue therein, as totally and finally to perish. He will, by sore chastisements, or such other means as, in his wisdom shall seem best, bring them to an affecting sense of their sins, to genuine repentance for them, and deep humiliation before him, -- as in the instances of Peter, David, and others, -- and restore them. "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." Psal. 89:30-34.

We exclude, in the consideration of this subject, all false professors of religion, of every description, whatever may be their attainments, as in the grace of knowledge, talents, or tongues, and power of working miracles, who, nevertheless, are, and continue destitute of the renewing grace of God. Hence, those who have made a fair show in religion for a time, as the foolish virgins, Matt. 25. The branches who were in the true vine, either by profession only, or in relation to Abraham, John 15. Those, who in a sense may have tasted of the good word of God, as the stony ground hearers, Matt. 13.; or, as Herod, who heard John gladly, Mat. 6:20. Those who may have embraced the doctrine of the gospel, frequently styled "The Faith," in the New Testament, Act. 24:24; 1Ti. 1:19; 2Ti. 3:8; as Hymeneus and Alexander, who in time made shipwreck thereof, 1Ti. 1:20. Those who have been enlightened, and had the gift of prophecy, as Balaam, 1Cor. 13:2; or who had

the gift of tongues -- power to work miracles, and, as such, tasted of the powers of the world to come, or of the gospel dispensation, as Judas, Heb. 6:5, -- all such we exclude, -- of all such there is no sufficient evidence, that any of them were renewed by the grace of God, but of many of them the fullest testimony they were not. We, therefore, cannot plead their perseverance in grace, which they never had; nor can such instances of defection, with any propriety, be produced as objections to the doctrine in contemplation.

We assert, that those only will persevere in the way of eternal life, and attain unto it, in whom the regenerating grace of God has, or will take place. That this will be the happy event with all such, through the riches of sovereign mercy and goodness, the following considerations evince.

The everlasting love of God to his people, manifested in Christ Jesus, tends to establish the truth.

Of his church of old, God says, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee," Jer. 31:3. This is the true origin of the stupendous plan laid by God the Father, for the salvation of his people. The true source of the execution of this plan is by the mediation of Christ the Son. From hence proceeds the execution of the gracious offices of the Holy Ghost, in the conversion of sinners, as a necessary preparation for the enjoyment of heaven. It is he who draws and leads them from death to life -- from sin to holiness -- from enmity to God to the love of him. Agreeably to this, divine testimony says, "We love him, because he first loved us," 1Jn. 4:19. "Having loved his own, he loveth them to the end," Joh. 13:1, -- even to everlasting.

That the love of God, in its manifestations and influences, would issue in the perseverance of the saints, and bring them to glory, Paul had the fullest assurance, when he asks with an air of triumph, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, -- nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," Rom. 8:35, Rom. 8:37-39.

This sentiment receives strength from the connection which subsists between the grace given to sinners, and God's eternal decrees; when the good work is begun, it is the gracious accomplishment of his purposes to them from everlasting. "Who hath called us with an holy calling, according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." On this foundation, then, the purpose of God, his word proceeds. The gospel is preached wherever it comes. "As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed," Act. 13:48. "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life," Joh. 3:36. "He that believeth, shall be saved," Mar. 16:16, -- shall not perish. "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved," Act. 2:47, -- should not be lost. Such is the inseparable connection between election -- grace communicated, and the contemplation of it in glory. "For whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified," Rom. 8:30.

The possession Christ has taken of the believer, by his grace, deserves notice. Formerly Satan had dominion; kept his goods in peace; reigned and ruled in them in the state of their unbelief and disobedience. But when the King of Zion arrests the sinner; casts out the strong man armed; takes the empire of the soul to himself, and establishes the kingdom of his grace, who shall dispossess him? Can it be supposed, that he who is conquered, dethroned, routed, and enfeebled, shall regain what he was unable to hold? Does Christ take possession, but to keep it! Shall any power subdue Omnipotence, recaptivate a new born heir of eternal life? No, none shall be able to pluck them out of his hand; nor out of his Father's hand, who is greater than all, Joh. 10:25-29.

The nature of this divine life merits our attention. The soul of man being immortal; eternal in its future existence; that which is necessary to its happiness ought to be of the like nature and duration. That principle of divine life by which the soul is quickened in regeneration, is such; "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish," Joh. 10:28. Its source is the eternal Jehovah; its communication free; its continuance durable as the immortal Spirit. It is assimilated to a seed that remained -- to a well of water springing up unto everlasting life, which the scorching heat of persecution, fiery trials, and darts of the devil, shall not dry up, but the riches of grace will replenish; to the smoking flax which shall not be quenched -- a spark of life -- which the many waters of affliction cannot quench, nor floods of temptation drown;

which will not expire amidst the dashing of the most boisterous waves of trouble and distress; but nourished by him that gave it -- will live and glow, till it shall blaze in eternal day.

All obstructions to the saints' perseverance and salvation are removed. The demands of the law of God against them are fully answered by Christ their surety. There is no condemnation to such, Rom. 8:1. The awful separation between God and them, made by sin, is healed; peace and reconciliation is made by the blood of the cross, Col. 1:20; Rom. 5:1. The way of communication with God is open; on God's part, to confer all spiritual blessings upon them; on their part, that they may have free access to God, through the mediation of Christ, Eph. 2:18. Their enemies are conquered, Psa. 89:23. The "works of the devil" destroyed, 1Jn. 3:8. Sin is dethroned, and "shall not have dominion over them," Rom. 6:14. The world is overcome. And, though imperfections cleave to them, and trials surround them, they have a prevailing advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, "who ever liveth to make intercession for them," Rom. 8:33-34.

It is a pleasure to observe, that the means for the promoting and effecting the perseverance of the saints are well established. Gifts for men, for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, the edifying of the body of Christ, Eph. 4:12. The divine word, rich in all important truth, tending to establish the soul in righteousness; the rich and precious promises of the gospel for encouragement and comfort; the most suitable instructions in every state of the spiritual warfare; faithful warnings against sin; the glorious examples of the saints, who have gone before us, to engage us to emulate their conduct; the falls and transgressions of others, held up as beacons, to warn all the camp of Israel against iniquity; the ministrations of the word, also, opening, illustrating, and enforcing the above; the ordinances of the gospel; prayer, Christian fellowship; together with the laws and discipline of the house of God; all tending, under a divine influence, to accomplish their final perseverance.

The Lord Jesus, overruling all things together for good to them who love God, is a further confirmation of this truth, Rom. 8:28. The gospel shall work effectually in them who believe, 1Th. 2:13. The various dispensations of Providence shall concur to this end. Prosperity sanctified, shall promote gratitude, obedience, and humility; adversity shall correct us; afflictions teach

the vanity of worldly enjoyments; bereavements, their uncertainty, and the necessity of a better hope. Those will cause the children of God to cleave to him. Tribulation shall work patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, that maketh not ashamed; and he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself.

But, brethren, the time would fail us to dwell on the considerations arising from the covenant of grace, ordered in all things, and sure; redemption by Jesus Christ; the charge he has taken of his people; the promises of the gospel, all tending to establish this doctrine. As also from the perfections of God, his immutability, justice, power, wisdom, faithfulness, and truth, all engaged to bring the heirs of grace, through perseverance therein, to glory.

A popular objection made to this doctrine is, that it tends to licentiousness; that if the perseverance of the saints is sure, they may be as wicked as any -- all will be well.

Strange, that proving the perseverance of saints in grace should be a license for them to be devils in wickedness! That advancing in holiness should be a reason for abounding in sin! It is fatal to this objection, that it bears the strongest features of that raised against the doctrines of grace of old: "Let us continue in sin, that grace may abound;" and may be well answered in like manner: "God forbid. How shall we, who are dead to sin, live any longer therein," Rom. 6:1-2. The objection is founded on the perverse disposition, not of a renewed, but of an unrenewed heart, which the love of God does not constrain; which does not love God for his holiness, nor delights in his law; nor has seen his ways, -- ways of pleasantness, and paths of peace; but is in love with sin, and rejoices in an excuse or opportunity to indulge it. As such, it is inapplicable to the real saint, who delights in the law of God after the inward man. The objection, therefore, ought to fall, and men of grace be ashamed to raise it again.

Another objection is, that the certainty of the saints' perseverance in grace leads to negligence and inattention to the duties of religion. We are ready to compare notes, not for a, transient flight of zeal, but through the whole lives of those real professors of religion who hold, and those who oppose, this doctrine. This objection rests on the same foundation with the other, and as liable to the same fate. It cannot be proved that this sentiment had this effect on the immediate real disciples of Christ; but it is abundantly evident it had

the reverse tendency. Paul, who had the highest confidence that he who had begun a good work in the saints at Philippi, would perform it till the day of Jesus Christ, and represents them as faithful and zealous brethren, says of himself, "I press forward toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," Php. 3:14. His brethren he exhorts, "Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God," 2Cor. 7:1.

To indulge a licentious spirit, or indifference to the duties of religion, on the ground of these objections, would be a most flagrant violation of the laws of reason, gratitude, and love.

May you, dear brethren, continue persuaded of this truth, and partake of the support to be derived from it. How uncertain are all temporal enjoyments and prospects! How happy for the people of God, that in the most important of all concerns, those of religion, there is a stability! That the foundation standeth sure, -- the Lord knoweth them that are his! Having begun a good work in you, he will perform it. That the perseverance of the saints in grace to the consummation of it in glory is sure! How supporting the reflection! how animating the prospect!

Shall not the stupendous plan of sovereign grace and love, by which the sinner's salvation will be so surely and fully completed, for ever command the admiration of angels and men!

Will not the warmest gratitude glow in every heart on the remembrance of it? Shall not the most cheerful obedience be rendered? the most ardent affection arise to God? the most devout adoration ascend from every soul? Surely these are the genuine offspring of grace, so great, so sure, so rich, so free.

Is there a professor amongst us to whom these emotions are not more common than the rising sun! Be alarmed, oh man! Has the law of sin gained the ascendancy over the law of thy mind? or hath the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus never made thee free from the law of sin and death? Examine thyself.

Are any fallen into sin, how great their ingratitude! How aggravated their transgressions, to sin against such amazing love, unspeakable goodness, and rich grace! to offend against so many and great obligations to obedience. What pungent distress, what shame, what sorrow, must ensue! How light my affliction compared with my sin! says the offender; surely he has not visited

me according to my sin, nor rewarded me according to my transgression. And oh! will he not take his loving kindness from me, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail? Is there yet hope? Oh, grace beyond degree!

With this prospect before us in prosperity, with this support in affliction, trial, and darkness, to which we are liable in this pilgrimage state, let us press forward in the way of truth and holiness. Now unto God the Father be glory in the church, through Jesus Christ, world without end. Amen.

SAMUEL JONES, Moderator.

JOHN STANCLIFF, Clerk.

Chapter XVIII

Of the Assurance of Grace and Salvation

1. Although temporary Believers, and other unregenerate men, may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes, and carnal presumptions, of being in the favour of God, and state of salvation, *(a)* which hope of theirs shall perish; yet such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love him in sincerity, endeavouring to walk in all good Conscience before him, may in this life be certainly assured *(b)* that they are in the state of Grace; and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God which hope shall never make them *(c)* ashamed.

(a) Job. 8:13-14; Mat. 7:22-23. *(b)* 1Jn. 2:3; 1Jn. 3:14; 1Jn. 3:18-19; 1Jn. 3:21; 1Jn. 3:24; 1Jn. 5:13. *(c)* Rom. 5:2; Rom. 5:5.

2. This certainty is not a bare conjectural, and probable perswasion, grounded upon *(d)* a fallible hope; but an infallible assurance of faith founded on the Blood and Righteousness of Christ *(e)* revealed in the Gospel; and also upon the inward *(f)* evidence of those graces of the Spirit unto which promises are made, and on the testimony of the *(g)* Spirit of adoption, witnessing with our Spirits that we are the children of God; and as a fruit thereof keeping the heart both *(h)* humble and holy.

(d) Heb. 6:11; Heb. 6:19. *(e)* Heb. 6:17-18. *(f)* 2Pe. 1:4-5; 2Pe. 1:10-11. *(g)* Rom. 8:15-16. *(h)* 1Jn. 3:1-3.

3. This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true Believer, may wait long and conflict with many difficulties before he be *(i)* partaker of it; yet being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God, he may without extraordinary revelation in the right use of means *(k)* attain thereunto: and therefore it is the duty of every one, to give all diligence to make their Calling and Election sure, that thereby his heart may be enlarged in peace and joy in the holy Spirit, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and chearfulness in the duties of obedience, the proper *(l)* fruits of this Assurance; so far is it *(m)* from inclining men to looseness.

(i) Isa. 50:10; Ps. 88. & Ps. 77:1-12. *(k)* 1Jn. 4:13; Heb. 6:11-12. *(l)* Rom. 5:1-2; Rom. 5:5; Rom. 14:17; Ps. 119:32. *(m)* Rom. 6:1-2; Tit. 2:11-12; Tit. 2:14.

4. True Believers may have the assurance of their Salvation divers ways

shaken, diminished, and intermitted; as (*n*) by negligence in preserving of it, by (*o*) falling into som special Sin, which woundeth the Conscience, and grieveth the Spirit, by some sudden or (*p*) vehement temptation, by God's withdrawing the (*q*) light of his countenance and suffering even such as fear him to walk in darkness and to have no light; yet are they never destitute of the (*r*) seed of God, and Life (*s*) of Faith, that Love of Christ, and the brethren, that sincerity of Heart, and Conscience of duty, out of which by the operation of the Spirit, this Assurance may in due time be (*t*) revived: and by the which in the mean time they are (*u*) preserved from utter despair.

(*n*) Son. 5:2-3; Son. 5:6. (*o*) Psa. 51:8; Psa. 51:12; Psa. 51:14. (*p*) Psa. 116:11; Psa. 77:7-8; Psa. 31:22. (*q*) Psa. 30:7 (*r*) 1Jn. 3:9. (*s*) Luk. 22:32. (*t*) Psa. 42:5; Psa. 42:11. (*u*) Lam. 3:26-31.

Circular Letter
Philadelphia Baptist Association
"The Assurance of Grace and Salvation"
By Rev. Joshua Jones
1792

The elders and messengers of the several churches met in Association, in the city of Philadelphia, October 2d, 1792.

To the churches in union with this Association, send greeting.

Dearly beloved brethren, -- According to the course of our order, the subject of our circular letter, this year, is the assurance of grace and salvation. Confession of faith, Chap. XVIII.

This is a subject of very great importance, with which all true Christians are concerned, and, perhaps, for the most part, make the matter of their most serious inquiry. It is, therefore, very obvious that it requires to be discussed with the greatest care, whereby it may tend to minister some revival of hope to the doubting Christian, and that the joy of faith may be increased in those that are of a higher attainment; while, at the same time, the nominal professor may be detected and convinced of his delusion.

In order to attempt something for the illustration of this very important article, several particulars are to be considered; as

First, That there are degrees in this grace of assurance, as well as in other graces of the Spirit. Divine revelation, and the experience of all ages, make it abundantly manifest, that there are some, who from a deep sense of their own sinfulness, together with the weak exercise of their graces, cannot help hesitating respecting their own interest in the great salvation that is in Christ; but yet they have such expectation of obtaining salvation by him, as bears them up from falling into despair. The true Christian views his own sins in their own colors, and they appear, attended with their several aggravations, horrid and detestable in his view; and he finds, by sad experience, that there is a body of sin and pollution in his nature, so that he cannot well tell how a gracious change in his heart can consist with so much sin and defilement; yet he would endeavor to conclude with the Psalmist, Psa. 65:3, "iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions thou shalt purge them away." The believer has a view, though it be weak, to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness; and it is from this source he draws all comforts, that his sins

are pardoned; and this confidence, though weak, enables him to look unto Jesus, whom he hath pierced with his sins, and hope that there is healing virtue in his blood; so that he rests his soul upon it, as that alone that can cleanse him from all sin. Though all this may not amount to a full assurance, that his state god-ward is good, yet he would not exchange it for all that the world could give him in lieu thereof.

Second, We are to consider that this grace of assurance is attainable in this life, not only in extraordinary cases, such as martyrdom, and under some other very difficult cases that some may be called to; but also in the common course of the dispensation of grace; for it may be justly observed, that every true Christian may and has a just right to conclude that his state God-ward is a state of peace, were it not for the remainder of unbelief that cleaves unto him; but this is what prevents it: and where this is done away and overcome, the Christian may say with holy Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth;" and with the apostle, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me," Gal. 2:20. And again, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," Php. 1:21. It is abundantly evident from divine revelation, that the grace of assurance in this life is attainable.

1. Because that it appears to be the privilege of believers in common; for this see 1Cor. 2:12, "For we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we may know the things that are freely given us of God." Here we see the apostle addresses these Corinthian believers, that they were interested in the same grace of assurance in common with himself; and in the first Epistle of 1Jn. 5:20, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true; even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." There is such provision made for it, so that the heirs of glory might have an undoubted hope of enjoying it. For this see Heb. 6:17-19, "Wherein God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise, the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us. Which hope we have as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast, which entereth into that within the veil." And moreover, it is spoken

of as something blamable in Christians, that they do not know their union with Christ, 2Cor. 13:5, "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

2. It appears that assurance is attainable in the present state of things, because it is inculcated upon us, to use diligence to make our calling and election sure. And were it not attainable, we conclude that so interesting a point would not be enjoined us; but it appears that is not the case. And it appears that those that live in a nearness to God in their affection of love, incline to keep his word practically, and the more we are in this salutary employment, there is a motive annexed, that is infinitely beyond the merit of our doing; for there is a promise to the disciples of Christ, to such as love him, and keep his word, that the Father and the Son will come and make their abode with them, by which we are to understand, that it means a manifestation of his fatherly love, and receive more of the Spirit of adoption, whereby they are, enabled to cry, Abba, Father. From hence it appears that those Christians that live in a nearness to God in their love and affections, have, for the most part, the clearest discovery of his love. But yet --

Thirdly, There is another particular to be inquired into; that is, the source and efficient cause from whence this full assurance of hope doth proceed, and that is the Spirit of God. Hence it is said, "that the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God," Rom. 8:16. It is said "the Spirit itself." Now when it is said, that a person doth something himself, it is to be understood, that he doth it not by another, or by a deputy; so that we are to understand, that it is the Holy Spirit that is the sole efficient cause of a Christian's having a clear manifestation of his interest in Christ; and this cannot be attained unto, without the witness of the Spirit. Here it may be inquired, how the Spirit doth witness? In answer to this, we are to consider what our Lord says concerning the Spirit, as we read in Joh. 16:14. Our Lord, speaking there of the Spirit, says, "He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." By which we are to understand, that it is owing to the influence of the Holy Spirit, that any Christian is enabled to behold the sufficiency that is in the blood of Christ to cleanse from all sins, and make an appropriation of it to himself; and the Holy Spirit is called the Comforter, which is very comprehensive, and includes in it not only comfort, but strength, light, and joy; because his assurance of hope is upon the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, and to behold that there is forgiveness of

sins through his blood, and that now all are "justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." It must be observed, that the Spirit witnessing by the word of grace, enables the soul to appropriate those great and precious promises to himself, by virtue of the witness of the Spirit itself, with our spirit, that we are the children of God. But here may arise a very serious inquiry, how may a believer know that it is the Spirit of God and not the spirit of delusion? We shall say no more, in answer to this, than that the Spirit itself can and will resolve it to his own children by his own powerful efficacy. Much might be said on this head, but brevity forbids us to enlarge.

Fourthly, We are to consider that the faith of assurance is not the essence of the faith of reliance, for the lowest degree must be attained before the highest, for the sealing of the Spirit comes after believing, and not always upon believing, for there are little children in this grace as well as strong men; for in our regeneration, we are to conclude that every grace of the Spirit, that is inseparably connected with salvation, is implanted in the heart of every true believer, though they may be weakly exercised by the sincere Christian. The conversion of some is more obvious than of some others, both to themselves and to their fellow Christians, and the Spirit may sweetly breathe on them his own impression, and the comforts derived therefrom; so that he that has only the faith of reliance, has some degree of appropriation; and yet not being clear of being beclouded, and of uncomfortable doubts prevailing in his breast, -- so as yet he loves, and wonders at the stupendous love, wisdom, and faithfulness of God, in laying "help on One who is mighty to save," and therefore he leans upon him for life and salvation, -- and yet those that have the faith of reliance, it is of that nature that it tends to purify the heart, and overcome the world; so that the soul is brought to an humble submission to the will of God, and beholds that there is no salvation in any other, and is enabled to rejoice that it is even so, and concludes, that this is all his hope. Although his sins appear to him of the deepest dye, yet he hopes to find mercy through the atoning blood of Jesus, because that it is revealed in the word of grace that it was to this end Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, the chief of sinners. Let it be observed, that if a Christian, whose faith amounts to no higher than that of affiance -- if he discovers in himself one link of the precious chain of salvation, he upon the best grounds may conclude, that he has the whole; for there is not one soul, that shall

perish, that has one of the saving graces of the Spirit, but then one is never alone; and that the Spirit of God may withhold the shinings of his face upon the operation that he hath wrought upon the heart of the believer, that relies on the merits of Christ for salvation -- and the believer may walk in darkness, as to the comfortable manifestation of everlasting love; for we find that this has been the case with some of God's dear children: and hence it is that such go mourning all the day; and this has been the case with some that had great nearness to God, and intimacy with him, as we may see in the 51st Psalm. It comes to pass commonly in consequence of their departing from God by sin, which was the case with the Psalmist, and in consequence of it their faith is shaken, and their assurance intermitted, and yet in regard of their secret state God-ward, it is a state of peace -- it is immovable and immutable, and the union subsisting, never can be dissolved. But,

Fifthly, We are to consider that there is such a thing as false hope, and counterfeit assurance; and this we are to guard against as one of the most pernicious evils that may befall the human mind. But by thus observing, we do not mean to discourage you, dear brethren, from appropriating to yourselves the riches of divine grace, and an assurance of an eternal weight of glory. But there is such a similarity between a sincere Christian and a nominal one, as there is between wheat and tares in the blade, which teaches us that a close inspection ought to be exercised by every one of us, whether we have in possession a vital principle of true religion. For the holy Scriptures hold forth unto us that many will be deceived at last, and meet a dreadful overthrow, by reason of building on a false foundation -- as we may see in Mat. 7:22-23. So that it is not every one that says he has an assurance of faith, who really hath it. And the apostle saith, "If a man thinketh himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself," Gal. 6:3; and a great many passages of holy writ might be adduced to prove this awful truth. But we proceed finally, to point out the great utility of the grace of assurance of hope, to those that have it, during their pilgrimage here on earth.

1. It enables them to submit, with cheerfulness, to adverse dispensations, upon the account that they are enabled to believe that their heavenly Father does every thing for good to them that love him.

2. Full assurance of hope enables them to believe whatever God is pleased to reveal concerning himself, because that there is now a greater nearness to

God than heretofore, and the more knowledge the believer has of God, the more acquaintance he has with himself, whereby he is made to behold his own impotence and ignorance; for until such time as the believer attains to some degree of assurance, carnal reason will retard his progress in the exercise of faith, particularly in some points that are beyond his rational comprehension. For the more assurance the believer attains unto, the more carnal reason is overcome; and therefore forms a just idea of the infinite disproportion that is between him and that Infinite Being in whom he confides. Believing that God's proceedings with all his creatures, are in infinite wisdom, justice and holiness; and that the Judge of the whole earth will do right; and this is one great means whereby the children of God are kept from apostatizing from the great fundamental articles of the Christian faith; and for want of which many in the present day run into such extremes of error, in turning the true meaning of the sacred Scriptures, in those very essential articles of the Christian faith, contrary to the very literal meaning of them. This comes to pass by leaning too much on their own carnal wisdom and judgment -- so they conclude that God has a different meaning from what his word conveys, and that impenitent sinners shall pass with impunity. From such errors as drown the wicked in perdition, those that have a well founded hope are finally preserved.

3. The grace or assurance will be of the greatest use in our last conflict with death, knowing that Christ has taken away the sting of death, and that death itself will be destroyed; so that the assured Christian is made to rejoice, that he has no cause to fear that any ill consequence will attend his exit out of time into eternity; and it enables him not only to submit to, but also to obey, with cheerfulness, the messenger his heavenly Father sends; being confident, upon good grounds, that he will be admitted into the society of "the spirits of just men made perfect," and so ever be with the Lord; where the weary are at perfect rest, and the wicked forever cease from troubling. The assurance of this is a prelibation or a foretaste of that heavenly glory that awaits all the children of God in a coming world.

Dear brethren, let these things sink deep into your hearts, whereby ye may be found in the lively exercise of every grace, and in the faithful discharge of every duty; and be enabled, with patience, to run the race that is set before you, "still looking to Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith."

Now, unto him who is able to keep you from falling, and present you faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy. To the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever." Amen.

Signed by order of the Association,

ISAAC SKILLMAN, Moderator.

BURGISS ALLISON, Clerk.

Chapter XIX

Of the Law of God

1. God gave to Adam a Law of universal obedience, *(a)* written in his Heart, and a particular precept of not eating the Fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; by which he bound him, and all his posterity to personal entire exact and perpetual *(b)* obedience; promised life upon the fulfilling, and *(c)* threatned death upon the breach of it; and indued him with power and ability to keep it.

(a) Gen. 1:27; Ecc. 7:29. *(b)* Rom. 10:5. *(c)* Gal. 3:10; Gal. 3:12.

2. The same Law that was first written in the heart of man, *(d)* continued to be a perfect rule of Righteousness after the fall; & was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in *(e)* Ten Commandments and written in two Tables; the four first containing our duty towards God, and the other six our duty to man.

(d) Rom. 2:14-15. *(e)* Deu. 10:4.

3. Besides this Law commonly called moral, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel Ceremonial Laws, containing several typical ordinances, partly of worship, *(f)* prefiguring Christ, his graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits; and partly holding forth divers instructions *(g)* of moral duties, all which Ceremonial Laws being appointed only to the time of reformation, are by Jesus Christ the true Messiah and only Law-giver who was furnished with power from the Father, for that end, *(h)* abrogated and taken away.

(f) Heb. 10:1; Col. 2:17. *(g)* 1Cor. 5:7. *(h)* Col. 2:14; Col. 2:16-17; Eph. 2:14; Eph. 2:16.

4. To them also he gave sundry judicial Laws, which expired together with the state of that people, not obliging any now by vertue of that institution; their general *(i)* equity onely, being of moral use.

(i) 1Cor. 9:8-10.

5. The moral Law doth for ever bind all, *(k)* as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof, and that not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the *(l)* authority of God the Creator; who gave it: Neither doth Christ in the Gospel any way dissolve, *(m)* but much strengthen this obligation.

(*k*) Rom. 8:1-10; Jas. 2:8; Jas. 2:10-12 (*l*) Jas. 2:10-11. (*m*) Mat. 5:17-19; Rom. 3:31.

6. Although true Believers be not under the Law, as a Covenant of Works, (*n*) to be thereby Justified or condemned; yet it is of great use to them as well as to others: in that, as a Rule of Life, informing them of the Will of God, and their Duty, it directs and binds them, to walk accordingly; (*o*) discovering also the sinfull pollutions of their Natures, Hearts and Lives; so as Examining themselves thereby, they may come to further Conviction of, Humiliation for, and Hatred against Sin; together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ and the perfection of his Obedience: It is likewise of use to the Regenerate to restrain their Corruptions, in that it forbids Sin; and the Threatnings of it serve to shew what even their Sins deserve; and what afflictions in this Life they may expect for them, although free'd from the Curse and unallayed Rigor thereof. The Promises of it likewise shew them Gods approbation of Obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof, though not as due to them by the Law as a Covenant of Works; so as mans doing Good and refraining from Evil, because the Law encourageth to the one and deterreth from the other, is no Evidence of his being (*p*) under the Law and not under Grace.

(*n*) Rom. 6:14; Gal. 2:16; Rom. 8:1; Rom. 10:4. (*o*) Rom. 3:20; Rom. 7:7. & c. (*p*) Rom. 6:12-14; 1Pe. 3:8-13.

7. Neither are the forementioned uses of the Law (*q*) contrary to the Grace of the Gospel; but do sweetly comply with it; the Spirit of Christ subduing (*r*) and inabling the Will of man, to do that freely and chearfully, which the will of God revealed in the Law, requireth to be done.

(*q*) Gal. 3:21. (*r*) Eze. 36:27.

CIRCULAR LETTER

Philadelphia Baptist Association

"The Law of God"

By Rev. Henry Smalley, A. M.

1794

The elders and messengers of the several churches met in Association, in the city of Philadelphia, October, 1794.

To the churches in union with the Association, send greeting:

Dearly beloved brethren, — According to the order observed in our excellent Confession of faith, the subject from which we shall address you in this circular letter, is the Law of God, commonly called the Moral Law, by some the law of reason and the law of nature, because it is agreeable to the reason and nature of things, and was perfectly understood by our first parents in a state of purity.

False apprehensions of this law, have constituted and spread extensive error and confusion, confirmed men in sin and rebellion against the throne of Jehovah, and eclipsed the glory of gospel grace. It is of great importance, therefore, that we entertain just ideas of the divine law: which law may be defined, "That relation which necessarily exists between the Creator and the creature; and will everlastingly continue necessary to exist, though not independent of the divine will." If this definition be just, the law of God is not arbitrarily imposed on his creatures; it results from their relation to their God and to each other.

Jehovah is our Creator and kind protector, the being of beings, his excellence infinitely transcends all derived excellence; he ought therefore to be loved for what he is in and of himself, as well as for the relation he stands in to his creatures. Nothing can destroy the obligation of rational beings to love their God. Our possessing hearts of enmity against God, is so far from rendering us excusable for not loving and serving him, that it is the very thing, in which our criminality consists. Has the creature a right to hate his God? Surely not. If he has no right to hate, he ought to love. There is no medium in the present case: We must either bless God, or curse him. But let us not refer the present question to the partial decisions of men; let us attend to the awful and majestic voice of God, in the ten commands promulgated from Mount Sinai, -- which commands, so far as they are moral, are of personal and perpetual

obligation; were written in the hearts of our first parents, in their state of innocency, and are written on the heart of every son and daughter of Adam, that has been born again, by the Spirit of the Lord and the power of his grace. This law, we have summarily comprehended by our Lord, in Matt. xxii. 37-39, "Jesus saith unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." "Love," says the Apostle, "is the fulfilling of the law."

The law of God refers to the whole man, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." The heart is required, the reason is obvious; religion consists in the disposition, and a man may work to eternity, -- if his heart is not in the work, it is nothing. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity," true love to God and man, "it profiteth me nothing."

This law being founded in reason and righteousness, being the unchangeable and everlasting rule of equity; as far as our actions are in agreement with it, they are right ; and as far as they deviate from its just requisitions, they are wrong. Christ "came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil." Unbelievers are as much under the curse of the law, as though our Lord had never obeyed it in his own person. See John iii. 18, 36. And those who have a true and living faith in Christ, are as much under the moral law, as a rule of duty, as ever they were. They have received a free and complete pardon of all their sins. "There is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus." But notwithstanding the penalty of the law cannot hurt the believer, he delights in the law of God after the inner man, and shall finally be brought into perfect conformity to its holy dictates. Those who are not conformed to the holy law of God in this world, must forever feel its awful penalty, eternal damnation.

We now proceed to the second grand division of this subject, as made by our Divine Teacher: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." If ever there was a period in which this precept required serious attention, it could not require it more than the present, when general discord pervades the nations. The great Creator has thought fit, that mankind should be united together in society. Mutual love and agreement are necessary to the prosperity of society; and it

is as impossible to conceive of a happy community, whose members shall hate each other; as it is to conceive of a material system, where repulsion shall universally take place.

The man who loves others as himself will discover this affection, by promoting the good of his neighbor, in every thing that concerns either his body, his mind, his fortune, or reputation. We show our love to our neighbor by doing him no injury ourselves, and by preventing others from injuring him; by doing him justice in all things, and by promoting his temporal and eternal happiness. Those selfish, narrow-hearted people, who frequently boast that they have done no hurt, are only negatively good, mere cyphers in creation, unworthy the dignified character of loyal benevolent beings; and are wholly unfitted for a place in that more extensive future society, which will consist of beings ennobled by virtue and true benevolence. Love for our neighbor will incline us to do him justice in his property and reputation.

The property received from a parent, who is in duty obliged to provide for his offspring; property acquired by a person's own ingenuity or industry, and property acquired by purchase; these are all lawful, and it is iniquitous for any one to deprive us of such established rights. Whoever loves his neighbor as himself will be as tender of his property, as he wishes others to be of his own; and will be more fearful of breaking in upon another's right, than of losing a part of what he himself possesses. Whoever is raised to a station of power or influence, and takes the advantage of this power to oppress his fellow creatures, shows himself not only unjust but base ; for the heart where the law of kindness dwells, contemns every unfair action. And how cruel is it, in such a person, to appropriate to his own use the property of the poor and indigent, who should rather be ready to. relieve their wants, when they look up to him in their distress. The withholding of a just debt, all breaches of trust, all undue advantages taken by the trader, in commerce and traffic, are iniquitous, and deserve the severest punishment.

We have already observed, that a man of real goodness will not injure his neighbor's reputation. It is a just remark of an eminent author, that every man has a right to be thought and spoken of agreeably to his real character. Whoever then is the cause why his neighbor is not considered in the light he deserves, grossly violates this sacred rule of duty, nor is he possessed of true benevolence. One of the greatest injuries. against our neighbor's reputation, is

falsehood in testimony. To open a door to villainy, to blast the character of an innocent person, are crimes of the deepest die; and few punishments can be too severe for such as are guilty of them. The voice both of Moses and of Christ, breathes love, peace, and good-will to man ; a temper conformed to its dictates, will shudder at the idea of spreading a false report. Even insinuations, by which an innocent character may be blemished, are cruel and impolitic. They are cruel, because they spring from malevolence of heart, and prove too often fatal to the peace and prospects of the unhappy victims ; they are irrational, because our own characters are in the hands of others, and our temporal concerns at their disposal.

The malicious causeless defamer, is certainly among the most abandoned characters in the world; neither profit, honor, nor pleasure, can he propose to himself, from the practice of his extraordinary disposition, unless the indulgence of malice be a pleasure; and if so, Satan has no inconsiderable share of happiness. The defamer has been justly compared to the dark assassin, who murders without giving notice of his intention. Here then is a law attended with no inconveniences, which not only leads us to the great duties we owe to our God, but also to the exercise of the first social duties to each other, as well as to practice those which we owe to ourselves.

Human laws are numerous, and too burdensome to the memory, and frequently raise disputes rather than intimate duty. But this worthy maxim is free from all perplexities; the most uninformed mind can scarcely misapprehend it, and the weakest memories are capable of retaining it. This precept lies ready on all occasions; we need but glance, as it were, upon our own minds, where it abides and shines like the polar star, to direct the course of the mariner. This injunction of our divine Redeemer is of vast and comprehensive influence, extending to all ranks and conditions of men, and to all kinds of action and intercourse between them, to matters of charity as well as justice, to negative as well as positive duties, to communities as well as individuals. But the law of God is not recommended to us by its own intrinsic excellence only; how many and how great are the advantages arising from a strict observance of it? The satisfaction it affords a rational mind, is certainly most refined and lasting. From hence arise pleasures that will flourish in the winter of adversity, illuminate death, and exist beyond time. The man who is conformed to the divine law, has the approbation of his own conscience, his great soul ever possesses a continued source of substantial

delight. In the near approach of death, peace shall dawn upon his mind, like the radiance of the morning; and as the exiled captive exults with the hopes, that he is returning to his native home, he will look forward with rapture toward the happy country where his heart has fled before him.

To consider the distress and dangers, to which a person who disregards these essential duties is exposed, affords a truly melancholy prospect. At enmity with his God, he cannot be happy in the nature of things; at enmity with his fellow men, they will conspire against him for their mutual defence. Revenge from some baneful corner shall return the injury on the defamer's head, — his character shall bleed by his own arts, — his faith shall be questioned, — his best works misrepresented, — his excellencies, if he have any, be forgotten, and his conduct meet with just and universal abhorrence.

Let us then, dear brethren, contemplate the law, in order to know our obligations to God, and the impossibility of obtaining eternal life, by any performances of our own. This will make us willing to submit to the righteousness of Christ, and enable us to stand with boldness in the great examination day.

By the Association,

WILLIAM ROGERS, Moderator.

THOMAS MEIMMINGER, Clerk.

Chapter XX

Of the Gospel, and of the extent of the Grace thereof

1. The Covenant of Works being broken by Sin, and made unprofitable unto Life; God was pleased to give forth the promise of Christ, *(a)* the Seed of the Woman, as the means of calling the Elect, and begetting in them Faith and Repentance; in this Promise, the *(b)* Gospel, as to the substance of it, was revealed, and therein Effectual, for the Conversion and Salvation of Sinners.

(a) Gen. 3:15. *(b)* Rev. 13:8.

2. This Promise of Christ, and Salvation by him, is revealed only by *(c)* the Word of God; neither do the Works of Creation, or Providence, with the light of Nature, *(d)* make discovery of Christ, or of Grace by him; so much as in a general, or obscure way; much less that men destitute of the Revelation of him by the Promise, or Gospel; *(e)* should be enabled thereby, to attain saving Faith, or Repentance.

(c) Rom. 1:17. *(d)* Rom. 10:14-15; Rom. 10:17. *(e)* Pro. 29:18; Isa. 25:7; with Isa. 60:2-3.

3. The Revelation of the Gospel unto Sinners, made in divers times, and by sundry parts; with the addition of Promises, and Precepts for the Obedience required therein, as to the Nations, and Persons, to whom it is granted, is meerly of the *(f)* Sovereign Will and good Pleasure of God; not being annexed by vertue of any Promise, to the due improvement of mens natural abilities, by vertue of Common light received, without it; which none ever did *(g)* make, or can so do: And therefore in all Ages the preaching of the Gospel hath been granted unto persons and Nations, as to the extent, or streightning of it, in great variety, according to the Councell of the Will of God.

(f) Psa. 147:20; Act. 16:7. *(g)* Rom. 1:18, &c.

4. Although the Gospel be the only outward means, of revealing Christ, and saving Grace; and is, as such, abundantly sufficient thereunto; yet that men who are dead in Trespases, may be born again, Quickned or Regenerated; there is moreover necessary, an effectual, insuperable *(h)* work of the Holy Spirit, upon the whole Soul, for the producing in them a new spiritual Life; without which no other means will effect *(i)* their Conversion unto God.

(*h*) Psa. 110:3; 1Cor. 2:14; Eph. 1:19-20. (*i*) Joh. 6:44; 2Cor. 4:4;
2Cor. 4:6.

CIRCULAR LETTER

Philadelphia Baptist Association

"The Gospel"

By Rev. Samuel Jones, D. D.

1795

The Philadelphia Baptist Association, convened at Philadelphia, the 6th, 7th, and 8th of October, 1795.

To the churches they represent, send Christian salutation.

Beloved Brethren, — Through the tender mercy of our God, we have had a comfortable meeting; for which we hope you will join us in thanksgiving.

Referring you to our minutes for information respecting our proceedings at this time, we pass on to the subject, on which, according to our course, we are now to address you. As we always, in our annual epistles, with fervent affection, aim at your instruction and edification, we hope our labor of love will ever be received and attended to with Christian benevolence, and that the effect will be, the building us up in our most holy faith.

The subject of our last address, was the Law — the next in order, in our most excellent Confession of faith, is the Gospel.

Between the Law and Gospel, there is a near connection; but, at the same time, a very material difference. The blending of these together, or treating of them in an injudicious and indistinct manner, has ever been a material source of error in the Christian church. It is, therefore, the more necessary to keep each of them in its proper place; and the rather on account, that a legal spirit is so natural to man, and a legal strain so difficult to be guarded against. Man is so naturally wedded to the Law, that he cannot easily be disengaged from it.

Would you know the difference between the Law and the Gospel? Only observe — the Law denounces wrath; the Gospel publishes peace; the Law convinces of guilt; the Gospel brings an acquittance; the Law pronounces sentence; the Gospel holds out a pardon; the Law requires satisfaction to the last mite; the Gospel discovers, that satisfaction has been made in full; the Law knows nothing of mercy; the Gospel knows nothing else: in the Law, righteousness, justice, and truth, shine gloriously; in the Gospel, love, grace, mercy, pity, condescension, and compassion do also shine, and with much

more resplendent glory: commands, prohibitions, conditions, threatenings, penalties, &c., belong to the law; but, in the Gospel, these have no place. In the Gospel we find free grace, free mercy, free pardon ; faith and repentance are freely given, and, with them, a new heart, a new nature, new life, — all is new, all is free. The Gospel, as the word signifies, is good message, good news, glad tidings. The language of the angels at the birth of Christ, was, "Behold, we bring you glad tidings of great joy," Luk. 2:10. The angelic prophet Isaiah, in that memorable passage, applied by our blessed Lord to himself and the gospel day, Luk. 4:18-19, breaks out in the following gospel strain: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness," Isa. 40:1-3,

The Gospel is sometimes called the Gospel of the grace of God, Act. 20:24, because it publishes the rich grace and mercy of God in Christ Jesus. Sometimes it is called the Gospel of salvation. Eph. 1:13; Act. 13:26, because it brings to light the way of life and salvation provided of God for lost, perishing sinners. Sometimes the Gospel of peace, because it proclaims that glorious peace made by the peace-making blood of Christ; produces peace and tranquillity in distressed minds, makes men to be of a peaceable disposition, directs men to, and leads in the way of peace, and makes meet for eternal peace.

The Gospel brings glad tidings of good things; good things done for us; in that atonement is made for us, our debt paid, a righteousness wrought out, pardon and acceptance procured: good things wrought in us; such as regeneration, meetness for heaven, faith, hope, and every other grace; all the good things of providence and grace that are necessary for our present use during our passage through life; and finally, the good things of heaven itself, even all the glory and happiness of the beatific state. The Gospel, in fine, contains a discovery of all good things for time and eternity, in deliverance from sin and every evil, and the full enjoyment of every bliss and happiness beyond what the tongue of men or angels can express, or the powers of the human mind conceive.

Of the Gospel we farther observe, that it is purely a matter of revelation, and is not discoverable by the light of nature. This revelation was made by slow degrees. On this head a late writer^[1] in our connection expresses himself thus: "The first dawning of the Gospel, and at the same time the first glimmering of hope, appeared to Adam in the promise that was made respecting the seed of the woman, Gen. 3:15. Here the eternal counsels of the grace of God began to unfold themselves. In the promise made to Abraham, which was afterwards renewed to Isaac and Jacob, the same gospel grace breaks forth with clearer light. What had before been spoken in more general terms of the seed of the woman, is now said in a more particular manner of the seed of Abraham, Gen. 22:18. To Jacob the very time of accomplishing the promise was pointed out, Gen. 49:10. Moses renders the promise still more manifest, while he points out a character and likeness, Deu. 17:15. In the prophets, who were much farther advanced in the dispensation of the promises, approaching to the fullness of time, hastening to the coming of the Messiah, you have his virgin mother, Isa. 7:5; place of birth, Mic. 5:2, and the other circumstances particularly pointed out. Only observe the order and progress of the divine promises, gathering light and strength as they advance. When the first intimation of a Saviour was given, he was to be sought for among all the human race; afterwards we are directed to the particular seed of Abraham; even Isaac and Jacob: of Jacob's numerous sons the tribe of Judah is taken; of the tribe of Judah the family of Jesse; and of Jesse's sons the house of David. Thus, reducing, as it were, to a point, what had at first been delivered but in very general terms.

"These are some of the leading and principal discoveries that were made to the world, of our blessed Saviour before his incarnation. Thus did the promises and prophecies become brighter and brighter, until at last they shone more clear in their full accomplishment, when the sun of righteousness rose, dispelling darkness, and spreading the light of the gospel-day."

This revelation of the Gospel has been made known to such nations, and applications of it made to such individuals of those nations, as it seemed good to the sovereign will and good pleasure of God. "It is not of him that willeth," says the apostle, "nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," Rom. 9:16.

The applications of the Gospel under the influence of the divine Spirit, in the

work of conviction and conversion, is absolutely necessary, in order to our receiving saving benefit from it. In this precious work of grace in our hearts, the Law and Gospel, considered as means, go hand in hand, and are often found in the same verse. By the one is the knowledge of sin, by the other the discovery of deliverance. The one worketh despair, the other faith and hope.

Thus, beloved brethren, you see, that the glorious Gospel, in every point of view, is the work of the rich and sovereign grace of God. It was of the sovereign grace and mercy of God, that the glorious plan of redemption was concerted, was published, and was afterwards, as it still is, applied to the elect, with all its saving benefits. O the glorious and blessed Gospel! O the sovereign grace and mercy of God in and through a gracious Redeemer!

From what we have said, various useful observations, by way of inference, might be made; but we shall only mention two:

First, that according to the Gospel, the atonement of Christ did not extend to every individual of the human race; and,

Secondly, that the Gospel contains no conditional offers of salvation.

We mention these, because some in our days seem to favor such notions, and some others, that tend to mar and go a great way towards sully the glory of the Gospel.

In regard to the first, if atonement was made for all, it was God's intention that it should; that intention must have its full effect; the effect must be that all must and will be saved.

If Christ answered the demands of law and justice for all, and paid the price in full, then there must be guiltless persons in hell for want of being made meet for heaven. Christ has done his part, but the Spirit declines doing his. Why God should appoint satisfaction to be made for all, and afterwards not renew and sanctify all, and bring them to heaven, must be very strange, and utterly inconsistent with the glory and perfections of Him, who does nothing in vain, who never does a part, without doing the whole, who always finishes what he begins.

It is manifest from the holy Scriptures, that Christ made atonement for his people, Isa. 53:8; Luk. 1:68; his sheep, Joh. 10:15, Joh. 10:26, Joh. 10:29; Joh. 17:9; those that were given him, Heb. 2:13; who were redeemed from among others, Rev. 5:9.

As to the second, to make salvation conditional, would rob God of his sovereignty, and make his glory to depend on man; while at the same time it would give room for boasting. It would also convert the Gospel of the grace of God into a new law. Is the law of works to be preferred to the covenant of grace? If it be of grace, says the apostle, then is it no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. What! make our happiness depend on man? If we will do part, God will do the rest. Alas! what can man do in the business of his salvation first or last, to merit or promote it? Is he altogether dependent on God? Yea, verily, that at every step, in the beginning and progress of the glorious work, he may cry, grace, grace; and whosoever glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

But these men make a distinction between natural and moral ability. What is the use of this distinction, but to evade, deceive, and confuse? What can natural ability avail towards producing a supernatural effect? The effect can never exceed its cause, any more than a stream can rise higher than its fountain. Now the exercise of any and every evangelical grace is supernatural, is purely of God: but what is born of the flesh is flesh. And besides, if man's natural ability was competent to repent, believe, accept, obey, &c., what good could it do him, since he is never to exert it, unless God induces or influences him thereto; and without which influence, all offers and moral suasion will prove ineffectual. If we speak of repentance, for instance, is not Christ exalted as a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins? If we speak of faith; what faith? natural faith? What can this be better than the faith of devils, who believe and tremble? But if we speak of supernatural and evangelical faith, the Scripture is express. By way of distinction from the other, it is called, the faith of the operation of God, the faith of God's elect, like precious faith with us, that faith which purifies the heart, and worketh by love. And in regard to them, who received him, it is said, to them gave he power. Yea, verily, all the power, influence, and every thing in the business of our salvation is entirely of God alone, and not of us, who are but perfect weakness.

The scheme of divine truth contained in the Holy Scripture, is manifestly this: That man fell from that state of rectitude wherein he was created, and became guilty, polluted, depraved, helpless, &c.; that God in his rich mercy and wisdom, devised a way for the recovery and salvation of such as to him seemed meet, which was doing no injury to others, that were left; that the

way of recovery is through the atoning blood of Christ, who glorified the divine perfections in making honorable the law, and bringing in an everlasting righteousness in behalf of and for those that were given him, who in God's own time and way are renewed and sanctified, made holy here and happy hereafter. To this end means are appointed, chiefly the word and the ministration thereof; wherein the state of the sinner by nature, and the way of recovery through rich grace is unfolded; and it pleases God to enlighten the mind; move on the affections, and subdue the will. The sinner is awakened and convicted; he sees his danger; is filled with concern of mind; enquires what he must do to be saved; has repentance unto life given him; is led to see the fulness, freeness, suitableness, and glory of the way of life through a Redeemer; is enabled to lay hold by faith of this hope; is transformed by the renewing of his mind; has the constraining love of God shed abroad in his heart; is humbled and abased in himself, yet triumphs in the mercy and power of God; and thus being filled with holy zeal, he goes on his way rejoicing. He is sensible the Lord of his mere sovereign unconditional grace and mercy began the good work, is now carrying it on, and will complete it in glory, to whom, therefore, without reserve, he ascribes all the praise, and will to all eternity.

It is now, brethren, time that we draw towards a conclusion. We hope you are in a good measure established in these truths, and that they are precious to you. May the Lord bless you, and the Gospel of his grace be among you, and may the time be hastened when it shall be spread in its purity with power and great glory over the whole earth.

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless, before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

THOMAS USTICK, Moderator.

PETER WILSON, Clerk.

Rev. MORGAN EDWARDS, formerly Pastor of the Philadelphia church,

resigned his place in the church militant in the year past. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

Note:

[1] Dr. Jones's Sermon on the Covenant.

Chapter XXI

Of Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience

1. The Liberty which Christ hath purchased for Believers under the Gospel, consists in their freedom from the guilt of Sin, the condemning wrath of God, the Rigour and *(a)* Curse of the Law; and in their being delivered from this present evil *(b)* World, Bondage to *(c)* Satan, and Dominion *(d)* of Sin; from the *(e)* Evil of Afflictions; the Fear, and Sting *(f)* of Death, the Victory of the Grave, and *(g)* Everlasting Damnation; as also in their *(h)* free access to God; and their yielding Obedience unto him not out of a slavish fear, *(i)* but a Child-like love, and willing mind. All which were common also to Believers under the Law *(k)* for the substance of them; but under the new Testament, the Liberty of Christians is further enlarged in their freedom from the yoke of the Ceremonial Law, to which the Jewish Church was subjected; and in greater boldness of access to the Throne of Grace; and in fuller Communications of the *(l)* Free Spirit of God, then Believers under the Law did ordinarily partake of.

(a) Gal. 3:13. *(b)* Gal. 1:4. *(c)* Act. 26:18. *(d)* Rom. 8:3. *(e)* Rom. 8:28. *(f)* 1Cor. 15:54-57. *(g)* 2Th. 1:10. *(h)* Rom. 8:15. *(i)* Luk. 1:74-75; 1Jn. 4:18. *(k)* Gal. 3:9; Gal. 3:14. *(l)* Joh. 7:38-39; Heb. 10:19-21.

2. God alone is *(m)* Lord of the Conscience, and hath left it free from the Doctrines and Commandments of men, *(n)* which are in any thing contrary to his Word, or not contained in it. So that to Believe such Doctrines, or obey such Commands out of Conscience, *(o)* is to betray true liberty of Conscience; and the requiring of an *(p)* implicit Faith, and absolute and blind Obedience, is to destroy Liberty of Conscience, and Reason also.

(m) Jas. 4:12; Rom. 14:4. *(n)* Act. 4:19 & Act. 5:29; 1Cor. 7:23; Mat. 15:9 *(o)* Col. 2:20; Col. 2:22-23 *(p)* 1Cor. 3:5; 2Cor. 1:24.

3. They who upon pretence of Christian Liberty do practice any sin, or cherish any sinfull lust; as they do thereby pervert the main design of the Grace of the Gospel, *(q)* to their own Destruction; so they wholly destroy *(r)* the end of Christian Liberty, which is, that being delivered out of the hands of all our Enemies we might serve the Lord without fear in Holiness, and Righteousness before him, all the days of our Life.

(*q*) Rom. 6:1-2. (*r*) Gal. 5:13; 2Pe. 2:18-21.

CIRCULAR LETTER

Philadelphia Baptist Association

"Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience"

By Rev. Thomas Memminger

1797

The elders and messengers of the churches belonging to the Philadelphia Baptist Association, met in Association at Lower Dublin, in the county of Philadelphia.

To the churches they represent, send christian salutation:

Dearly beloved, — In the course of his providence, it hath seemed good unto the Lord again to visit the city of Philadelphia with the rod of his chastisement, in sending among the inhabitants a malignant fever; in consequence of which, it has been thought right that this Association should be held in some place free from the disease; from whence we now address you by this our letter.

We rejoice in the Lord that we, as the spared monuments of his mercy, have been permitted to meet each other by the respective messengers of the churches; from whom we have been glad to hear of the general welfare of Zion, and return thanks unto the great head of the church for the unanimity and brotherly love which have existed among us while in Association.

The subjects, upon which you will be addressed by us this year, are the important ones of Christian liberty and liberty of conscience, which come next in order in our Confession of faith.

That there is a liberty, and a glorious liberty too, which is the inheritance and portion of the people of God, is a fact clearly established, not only by the experience of all those who are made alive unto God in Christ, but also by the unerring testimony of the Spirit of truth as given in the word of God, declaring that, he that is called in the Lord, although he be a servant, is the Lord's free man.

The existence of spiritual bondage, as opposed to this liberty, is also clearly ascertained by the same incontrovertible testimony: the sons of men having, because of transgression, even in their first legal representative and head, sold themselves for nought, being brought into bondage unto Satan, and having made themselves the servants of sin, for whosoever committeth sin is

the servant of sin.

In this state of bondage mankind are naturally, and their evidence of their being so, is the desperate wickedness of their hearts, inclined to evil as the sparks are to fly upwards, leading them on to the perpetration of all manner of sin and uncleanness with delight and greediness: hence they are brought under bondage to the law, and are under its curse. While thus the wrath of God abideth on them; considered in this point of view they are the slaves of Satan, and remain, unless Jesus deliver them, all their lives long in this servitude, by reason of the fear of death, and the awful prospect of a future state of never-ending punishment. They are also tied to the world, and labor under the guilt of sin. Deplorable state in which men stand! without a deliverance from which the mind shudders at the fearful prospect before them.

But blessed be our God with him there is redemption, that he may be feared; and it hath pleased him to place all power in the hands of Jesus, so that if the Son make us free, we shall be free indeed not only from the guilt and condemnation of sin, but also from the weight and burden of the law, which we are told gendereth to bondage — he bringing them under the gospel, which is the perfect law of life and liberty. For we also were in bondage under the same, until the fulness of the time was come, when God sent forth his Son, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. Wherefore, those that are thus delivered, are no more servants but "sons; and if sons, then heirs of God, through Christ." They are delivered from the condemnation of the law; for "there is now no condemnation to them, which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." They are released by him from the dominion of sin and death; "for the law of the Spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath made them free from the law of sin and death." From the fear of death, the king of terrors to the sons of men, they are specially released; "forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also, himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him, that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." From the evil consequences of temporal affliction and distress, which in the children of disobedience work resentment against the good providence of a God of wisdom, they are peculiarly freed; because, by the Spirit of adoption, beholding God as their indulgent father,

they know that " all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

But, beloved brethren, the glorious liberty of the sons of God as wrought out for them by the blessed Jesus, the deliverer of the captives of sin, extends further than what has been stated unto you. The veil between time and eternity is rent, — for them the everlasting doors of heaven are thrown open: and they who are led by his free Spirit have an access unto the throne of the most high God, and are privileged to go in and out and find pasture. For "now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace;" and through him we, both Jews and Gentiles, all that are named of the family in heaven and on earth, all that are called, "have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God;" and may exercise boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus in full assurance of faith.

The service of God is performed, by such as are brought into this precious liberty with perfect pleasure; the love of that God, who hath saved them and redeemed them, casteth out all slavish fear, and with a willing mind and filial affection they delight to do his will.

Such is the glorious liberty which Christ was anointed to proclaim to the captives, such the opening of the prison to them that were bound, such the freedom of which none can deprive you, and from which you cannot be excluded.

But dearly beloved and longed for, our hope and crown of rejoicing, the blessed Captain of our salvation hath thus freed us, that we might manifest to the glory of God, that the liberty in which we stand is not connected with licentiousness, but is continually the attendant of the Spirit of God leading into all truth and righteousness before him: now the Lord is that Spirit: and "where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." For so is the will of God, that with well-doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, (who charge this doctrine of our liberty as licentious, thinking they spy out that which they know nothing of,) that you as free should not use your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness but as the servants of God. For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty, only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh.

It is to be regulated by an attention to the whole moral law as the rule of our

conduct both toward God and our fellow men: " For whose looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." Therefore, so speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. Remembering that of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage; for ye cannot be the freed men of Christ, and the servants of sin, because no man can serve two masters. Christ hath ransomed you for this same purpose; "that you being delivered out of the hands of your enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of your life:" "Knowing this that your old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin: for he that is dead is freed from sin. For we are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that we should be married to another, even to him, who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

The all-wise Jehovah has given unto all men an equal freedom and liberty of conscience, the court of which is sacred, and wherein none have a right to tread but the individual himself and the blessed God by his word and Spirit, those only being the judges, who have authority to decide all matters concerning it. The angels of God themselves have no authority to interfere therein, much less any of the sons of men who are creatures of the dust, short sighted beings of a moment; and therefore their commandments, doctrines, or ordinances, unless founded upon, consistent with, and springing out of his word, which alone is truth, are by no means to be considered by you as obligatory; who, having your consciences purged from dead works, are called upon to hearken unto God, rather than unto men, making his word alone your rule and guide in all things.

And now, brethren, we bid you farewell. May that God who hath by his grace placed you in the liberty wherein you stand, enable you to stand fast therein; until you behold the top stone of the building brought forth in Heaven, shouting — Grace! Grace unto it! Amen.

By order of the Association,

WILLIAM ROGERS, Moderator.

PETER WILSON, Clerk.

Chapter XXII

Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day

1. The light of Nature shews that there is a God, who hath Lordship, and Sovereignty over all; is just, good, and doth good unto all; and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the Heart, and all the Soul, *(a)* and with all the Might. But the acceptable way of Worshipping the true God, is *(b)* instituted by himself; and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be Worshipped according to the imaginations, and devices of Men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representations, or *(c)* any other way, not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures.

(a) Jer. 10:7; Mar. 12:33. *(b)* Deu. 32:1. *(c)* Exo. 20:4-6.

2. Religious Worship is to be given to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and to him *(d)* alone; not to Angels, Saints, or any other *(e)* Creatures; and since the fall, not without a *(f)* Mediator, nor in the Mediation of any other but *(g)* Christ alone.

(d) Mat. 4:9-10; Joh. 5:23; Mat. 28:19. *(e)* Rom. 1:25; Col. 2:18; Rev. 19:10. *(f)* Joh. 14:6. *(g)* 1Ti. 2:5.

3. Prayer with thanksgiving, being one special part of natural worship, is by God required of *(h)* all men. But that it may be accepted, it is to be made in the *(i)* Name of the Son, by the help *(k)* of the Spirit, according to *(l)* his Will; with understanding, reverence, humility, fervency, faith, love, and perseverance; and when with others, in a *(m)* known tongue.

(h) Psal. 95:1-7; Psal. 65:2. *(i)* Joh. 14:13-14. *(k)* Rom. 8:26. *(l)* 1Jn. 5:14. *(m)* 1Cor. 14:16-17.

4. Prayer is to be made for things lawful, and for all sorts of men living, *(n)* or that shall live hereafter; but not *(o)* for the dead, nor for those of whom it may be known that they have sinned *(p)* the sin unto death.

(n) 1Ti. 2:1-2; 2Sa. 7:29. *(o)* 2Sa. 12:21-23. *(p)* 1Jn. 5:16.

5. The *(q)* reading of the Scriptures, Preaching, and *(r)* hearing the word of God, teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual songs, singing with grace in our Hearts to *(s)* the Lord; as also the Administration *(t)* of Baptism, and *(u)* the Lords Supper are all parts of

Religious worship of God, to be performed in obedience to him, with understanding, faith, reverence, and godly fear; moreover solemn humiliation (*x*) with fastings; and thanksgiving upon (*y*) special occasions, ought to be used in an holy and religious manner.

(*q*) 1Ti. 4:13. (*r*) 2Ti. 4:2; Luk. 8:18. (*s*) Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19 (*t*) Mat. 28:19-20. (*u*) 1Cor. 11:26. (*x*) Est. 4:16; Joe. 2:12 (*y*) Exo. 15:1. &c. Ps. 107.

6. Neither Prayer, nor any other part of Religious worship, is now under the Gospel tied unto, or made more acceptable by, any place in which it is (*z*) performed, or towards which it is directed; but God is to be worshipped every where in Spirit, and in truth; as in (*a*) private families (*b*) daily, and (*c*) in secret each one by himself, so more solemnly in the publick Assemblies, which are not carelessly, nor wilfully, to be (*d*) neglected, or forsaken, when God by his word, or providence calleth thereunto.

(*z*) Joh. 4:21; Mal. 1:11; 1Ti. 2:8. (*a*) Act. 10:2. (*b*) Mat. 6:11; Psa. 55:17. (*c*) Mat. 6:6 (*d*) Heb. 10:25; Act. 2:42.

7. As it is of the Law of nature, that in general a proportion of time by God's appointment, be set apart for the Worship of God; so by his Word in a positive-moral, and perpetual Commandement, binding all men, in all Ages, he hath particularly appointed one day in seven for a (*e*) Sabbath to be kept holy unto him, which from the beginning of the World to the Resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week; and from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week (*f*) which is called the Lord's day; and is to be continued to the end of the World, as the Christian Sabbath; the observation of the last day of the week being abolished.

(*e*) Exo. 20:8. (*f*) 1Cor. 16:1-2; Act. 20:7; Rev. 1:10.

8. The Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering their common affairs aforehand, do not only observe an holy (*g*) rest all the day, from their own works, words, and thoughts, about their worldly employment, and recreations, but also are taken up the whole time in the publick and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties (*h*) of necessity and mercy.

(*g*) Isa. 58:13; Neh. 13:15-23. (*h*) Mat. 12:1-13.

CIRCULAR LETTER

Philadelphia Baptist Church

"Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day"

By Rev. David Jones, A. M.

1798

The messengers of the churches of Christ belonging to the Philadelphia Baptist Association, met at New Mills, in the State of New Jersey.

To their respective churches, send greeting.

Beloved brethren, — We have been once more prevented assembling in the city of Philadelphia by a dreadful visitation from God. Whatever may be the natural cause of this complaint, no doubt SIN is the procuring cause; nor can we reasonably expect a removal of the calamity without a suitable reformation among the inhabitants, for which we ought fervently to pray to God; and who knoweth but he may, in his great mercy, graciously answer our supplications.

The subject to which we shall call your attentions this year is, "Religious worship and the Sabbath day," being Chapter XXII. of our Confession of faith.

That there is an eternal, almighty, unsearchable God, the creator and upholder of all things, the works of creation, as well as divine revelation, do clearly make appear; but the acceptable manner, in which we are to honor and worship him, is made known only by divine revelation, for which we should ever adore our God.

The object of all divine and religious worship, is the Godhead, consisting of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and these three personal distinctions are only one and the same Divine Being, from everlasting to everlasting the same one, living, and true God, blessed for evermore.

That He alone is the object of religious worship, is evident from many texts of Holy Scripture, and in particular Mat. 4:10, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him ONLY shalt thou serve."

All religious worship is to be performed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and men. To call on any other as mediator or intercessor, is contrary to divine revelation, and highly dishonorable to our adorable Redeemer, as well as shameful idolatry. Nor

should such idolaters ever be esteemed Christians, whatever they may believe, or profess to believe, on other subjects connected with Christianity. Some of the texts of Scripture to which we would refer you, on this subject, are the following, viz., "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me," Joh. 14:6. And in the 13th verse, it is said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," 1Ti. 2:5; "For through him, we both have access, by one Spirit, unto the Father," Eph. 2:18.

And whereas, by reason of the fall, all men are depraved, blind, and insensible of their spiritual wants, it is necessary to have the assistance of the holy Spirit to prepare our hearts, and strengthen our souls to give glory and honor to God suitable to the divine nature. Our faith on this subject is founded on the following texts, with many others: viz., "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications," Zec. 12:10; "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us," Rom. 8:26. Many other passages of Scripture might be mentioned to the same purpose; but this subject is generally acknowledged by all who are worthy of the name of Christians. At the same time, we may confess with deep humility and sorrow of heart, that God has in a great measure suspended the powerful operations of his Holy Spirit in our churches. Oh that it were with us as in years past! All our preaching, and all your hearing, will be to little purpose, without the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit.

We now proceed to observe a few things with respect to the time of performing religious worship. We are taught that God is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth, and that we should pray without ceasing; yet it is necessary to have, in the churches, fixed times for public worship. And it is to be wished that all Christians were unanimous on this subject; but there is little hope of this being the case, till we drop all traditions and traditional modes of speech; for these things will cause many mistakes.

The compilers of our Confession of faith were desirous to use the same language with other Christians, as far as was thought consistent with a good conscience; and it may be, on this subject, they conformed more than can be

supported by the Holy Scriptures, or any arguments justly drawn from them. Should we express ourselves in a manner different from them, we are in hopes it will give no offence to any of our brethren; and we are rather persuaded the manner in which we shall treat this subject, will be generally acceptable, if the arguments are calmly considered.

We shall inquire into two points relative to the subject.

I. Whether the fourth command was moral or ceremonial?

II. By what authority Christians observe the first day of the week as a day of worship?

I. It is not pretended that the word moral is used either in the Old or New Testament. By it, we understand those obligations, which in their nature are unalterable, and binding on all men; and by ceremonial, we are to understand such commands as were types or shadows of spiritual things, which might be abolished by the will of the legislator.

Having premised these things, we proceed to show that the fourth command was not moral, notwithstanding it is sometimes placed with moral commands; but this is not always the case.

There is in the nature of things no reason why one day should be appropriated to religious worship more than another, for God is the same every day, and is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. The observance of one day more than another was instituted for certain reasons, and was binding on those to whom the will of God was made known; but not on the Gentiles, who were never charged with a breach of the Sabbath. The word Sabbath signifies rest; and two reasons are given in Scripture why God enjoined it on the Jews. The first is that God finished the works of creation in six days, and rested the seventh, Exo. 20:11. The second reason is the deliverance of Israel from their bondage in Egypt. When Moses repeated the law in Deu. 5:15, he said, "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm; therefore, the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day." The Sabbath is repeatedly mentioned as a sign between God and the children of Israel throughout their generations, and seems limited to them.

For want of room, we must omit many arguments; but it may suffice to say that a ceremonial command is an institution of God to bring to mind some

events past, or to come. Such was the passover, and such was the Jewish Sabbath. It brought to mind the finishing of the creation in six days, and God's resting the seventh, as well as the deliverance of the children of Israel from their bondage in Egypt; and it alludes to that rest which a soul enjoys when enabled to believe in Christ.

The answer of our blessed Lord to the Pharisees, accusing his disciples of breaking the Sabbath, plainly proves that he considered the Sabbath as a ceremonial command. We shall transcribe the passage and make a few remarks. "And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar, the high priest, and did eat the show bread, which is not lawful to eat, but for the priests, and gave also to them that were with him? And he said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath; therefore, the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath," Mar. 2:25-28. This passage affords an unanswerable proof in what light Christ considered the Sabbath; for had the Sabbath been a moral command, there would have been no propriety in quoting the breach of a ceremonial command as a parallel case.

II. We proceed to show by what authority we keep the first day of the week, as a day of Christian worship.

We would premise that the duties of the Gospel differ in many respects from the law of Moses; for the law says, "Do this and thou shalt live;" but the Gospel says, "Live, and as a child of God and joint heir with Christ, do this, for his yoke is easy and his burden is light."

We do not say that there is any express command in the New Testament positively making it a duty to worship on the first day of the week; yet from the examples of the disciples, we have reason to believe that the disciples met by the authority of Christ; for some of his last words to his apostles were a solemn injunction, to do as he commanded, which are these: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," Mat. 28:20. If we admit that the apostles were faithful, of which we can have no doubt, we must believe that their practice was conformable to the command of Christ; we would, therefore, refer you to their example, recorded in Joh. 20:19 and Joh. 20:26, "Then the same day, at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the

Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." "And after eight days, again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you." And in Act. 20:7, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." The historian mentions it as the practice of the church at Troas, and hence we find it as the known and established order of Christian churches in Galatia and Corinth, as appears from 1Cor. 16:1-2. And in John's time, it seems to have obtained the name of the Lord's day, Rev. 1:10.

We must close this epistle in a few words respecting the manner in which this day of worship ought to be observed.

Let us avoid all worldly business as far as possible, that we may with singleness of heart wait upon God in all the appointed means of grace. In order to obtain this end, we should use our best endeavors to dismiss all our worldly affairs on the seventh day of the week, that we may be prepared for divine worship.

We should spend the morning of the Lord's day in prayer or reading the holy Scriptures, or other good books composed by the servants of Jesus Christ; and never allow small excuses to prevent our meeting with the disciples of Christ for divine worship. None can tell how much is lost by omissions of duty. It is good to wait on the Lord, for he walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks, and sits as a refiner or purifier of his people. From the apostle's words, in Heb. 10:25, it seems some were faulty in his day, and forsook the assembling together, a sure sign of backsliding of heart. Think not the duties of the day ended when you have attended public worship; but make a good improvement of time, for it is very precious. Therefore, redeem the time by doubling your diligence.

Be not conformed to the vain customs of the present age, in paying or receiving unprofitable visits on the Lord's day, for this will tend to destroy the power of religion.

From the above arguments, we may justly infer, that the religious observance of the Lord's day for divine worship, is warranted by the examples of the apostles and churches in their days. Consequently, we have sufficient grounds to believe that it was by the authority of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is the head of his church and lawgiver to the body.

And now, dear brethren, we commend you to God and the word of his grace,
and remain in the Gospel of Christ.

By order of the Association,

DAVID JONES, Moderator.

BURGISS ALLISON, Clerk.

Minute #14 The circular letter written by Brother David Jones, was read; and Brethren Samuel Jones, Reune Runyon, Isaac Skillman, William Staughton, and Burgiss Allison, were appointed a committee to revise the same in conjunction with the author.

Minute #15 The committee appointed to revise the circular letter, brought it forward with amendments, which being read, it was approved.

[Ed. It is assumed this is the amended version of the circular letter.]

Chapter XXIII

Of Singing of Psalms & etc.

1. We believe that singing the praises of God, *(a)* is a holy ordinance of Christ, and not a part of natural religion, or a moral duty only; but that it is brought under divine institution, it being enjoined on the churches of Christ to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; and that the whole church in their public assemblies (as well as private Christians) ought to sing God's praises according to the best light they have received. *(b)* Moreover, it was practised in the great representative church by our Lord Jesus Christ with His disciples, *(c)* after He had instituted and celebrated the sacred ordinance of His holy supper, as a commemorative token of redeeming love.

(a) Act. 16:25; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16. *(b)* Heb. 2:12; Jas. 5:13. *(c)* Mat. 26:30.

Chapter XXIV

Of Lawful Oaths and Vows

1. A lawful Oath is a part of religious worship, *(a)* wherein the person swearing in Truth, Righteousness, and Judgement, solemnly calleth God to witness what he sweareth; *(b)* and to judge him according to the Truth or falseness thereof.

(a) Exo. 20:7; Deu. 10:20; Jer. 4:2. *(b)* 2Ch. 6:22-23.

2. The Name of God only is that by which men ought to swear; and therein it is to be used, with all Holy Fear and reverence, therefore to swear vainly or rashly by that glorious, and dreadful name; or to swear at all by any other thing, is sinful and to be *(c)* abhorred; yet as in matter of weight and moment for confirmation of truth, *(d)* and ending all strife, an Oath is warranted by the Word of God; so a lawful Oath being imposed, *(e)* by lawful Authority, in such matters, ought to be taken.

(c) Mat. 5:34; Mat. 5:37; Jas. 5:12. *(d)* Heb. 6:16; 2Cor. 1:23. *(e)* Neh. 13:25.

3. Whosoever taketh an Oath warranted by the Word of God, ought duely to consider the weightiness of so solemn an act; and therein to avouch nothing, but what he knoweth to be the truth; for that by rash, false, and vain Oaths the *(f)* Lord is provoked, and for them this Land mournes.

(f) Lev. 19:12; Jer. 23:10.

4. An Oath is to be taken in the plain, and *(g)* common sense of the words; without equivocation, or mental reservation.

(g) Psa. 24:4.

5. A Vow which is not to be made to any Creature, but to God alone, *(h)* is to be made and performed with all Religious care, and faithfulness: But Popish Monastical Vows, *(i)* of perpetual single life, professed *(k)* poverty, and regular obedience, are so far from being degrees of higher perfection, that they are superstitious, *(l)* and sinful snares, in which no Christian may intangle himself.

(h) Psa. 76:11; Gen. 28:20-22. *(i)* 1Cor. 7:2; 1Cor. 7:9. *(k)* Eph. 4:28. *(l)* Mat. 19:11.

Chapter XXV

Of the Civil Magistrate

1. God the supream Lord, and King of all the World, hath ordained Civil (*a*) Magistrates to be under him, over the people for his own glory, and the publick good; and to this end hath armed them with the power of the Sword, for defence and encouragement of them that do good, and for the punishment of evil doers.

(*a*) Rom. 13:1-4.

2. It is lawful for Christians to Accept, and Execute the Office of a Magistrate when called thereunto; in the management whereof, as they ought especially to maintain (*b*) Justice, and Peace, according to the wholesome Laws of each Kingdome, and Commonwealth: so for that end they may lawfully now under the New Testament (*c*) wage war upon just and necessary occasions.

(*b*) 2Sa. 23:3; Psa. 82:3-4. (*c*) Luk. 3:14.

3. Civil Magistrates being set up by God, for the ends aforesaid; subjection in all lawful things commanded by them, ought to be yeilded by us, in the Lord; not only for wrath (*d*) but for Conscience sake; and we ought to make supplications and prayers for Kings, and all that are in Authority, (*e*) that under them we may live a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.

(*d*) Rom. 13:5-7; 1Pe. 2:17. (*e*) 1Ti. 2:1-2.

Chapter XXVI

Of Marriage

1. Marriage is to be between one Man and one Woman; *(a)* neither is it lawful for any man to have more then one Wife, nor for any Woman to have more then one Husband at the same time.

(a) Gen. 2:24; Mal. 2:15; Mat. 19:5-6.

2. Marriage was ordained for the mutual help *(b)* of Husband and Wife, *(c)* for the increase of Mankind, with a legitimate issue, and for *(d)* preventing of uncleanness.

(b) Gen. 2:18. *(c)* Gen. 1:28. *(d)* 1Cor. 7:2; 1Cor. 7:9.

3. It is lawful for *(e)* all sorts of people to Marry, who are able with judgment to give their consent; yet it is the duty of Christians *(f)* to marry in the Lord, and therefore such as profess the true Religion, should not Marry with Infidels, *(g)* or Idolaters; neither should such as are godly be unequally yoked, by marrying with such as are wicked, in their life, or maintain damnable Heresie.

(e) Heb. 13:4; 1Ti. 4:3. *(f)* 1Cor. 7:39. *(g)* Neh. 13:25-27.

4. Marriage ought not to be within the degrees of consanguinity, *(h)* or Affinity forbidden in the word; nor can such incestuous Marriage ever be made lawful, by any law of Man or consent of parties, *(i)* so as those persons may live together as Man and Wife.

(h) Levit. 18. *(i)* Mar. 6:18; 1Cor. 5:1.

Chapter XXVII

Of the Church

1. The Catholick or universal Church, which (with respect to the internal work of the Spirit, and truth of grace) may be called invisible, consists of the whole *(a)* number of the Elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

(a) Heb. 12:23; Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:10; Eph. 1:22-23; & Eph. 5:23; Eph. 5:27; Eph. 5:32

2. All persons throughout the world, professing the faith of the Gospel, and obedience unto God by Christ, according unto it; not destroying their own profession by any Errors everting the foundation, or unholyness of conversation, *(b)* are and may be called visible Saints; *(c)* and of such ought all particular Congregations to be constituted.

(b) 1Cor. 2:1; Act. 11:26. *(c)* Rom. 1:7; Eph. 1:20-22.

3. The purest Churches under heaven are subject *(d)* to mixture, and error; and som have so degenerated as to become *(e)* no Churches of Christ, but Synagogues of Satan; nevertheless Christ always hath had, and ever shall have a *(f)* Kingdome in this world, to the end thereof, of such as believe in him, and make profession of his Name.

(d) 1 Cor. 15; Rev. 2. & ch. 3. [Most modern editions cite 1Cor. 5:1-13 rather than 1 Corinthians 15 here.] *(e)* Rev. 18:2; 2Th. 2:11-12.

(f) Mat. 16:18; Psal. 72:17; & Psal. 102:28; Rev. 12:17.

4. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, in whom by the appointment of the Father, *(g)* all power for the calling, institution, order, or Government of the Church, is invested in a supream & soveraign manner, neither can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof, but is *(h)* that Antichrist, that Man of sin, and Son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ, and all that is called God; whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

(g) Col. 1:18; Mat. 28:18-20; Eph. 4:11-12. *(h)* 2Th. 2:3-9.

5. In the execution of this power wherewith he is so intrusted, the Lord Jesus calleth out of the World unto himself, through the Ministry of his word, by

his Spirit, (*i*) those that are given unto him by his Father; that they may walk before him in all the (*k*) ways of obedience, which he prescribeth to them in his Word. Those thus called he commandeth to walk together in particular societies, or (*l*) Churches, for their mutual edification; and the due performance of that publick worship, which he requireth of them in the World.

(*i*) Joh. 10:16; Joh. 1:1. (*k*) Mat. 28:20. (*l*) Mat. 18:15-20.

6. The Members of these Churches are (*m*) Saints by calling, visibly manifesting and evidencing (in and by their profession and walking) their obedience unto that call of Christ; and do willingly consent to walk together according to the appointment of Christ, giving up themselves, to the Lord & one to another by the will of God, (*n*) in professed subjection to the Ordinances of the Gospel.

(*m*) Rom. 1:7; 1Cor. 1:2. (*n*) Act. 2:41-42; Act. 5:13-14; 2Cor. 9:13.

7. To each of these Churches thus gathered, according to his mind, declared in his word, he hath given all that (*o*) power and authority, which is any way needfull, for their carrying on that order in worship, and discipline, which he hath instituted for them to observe; with commands, and rules, for the due and right exerting, and executing of that power.

(*o*) Mat. 18:17-18; 1Cor. 5:4-5; with 1Cor. 5:13; 2Cor. 2:6-8.

8. A particular Church gathered, and compleatly Organized, according to the mind of Christ, consists of Officers, and Members; And the Officers appointed by Christ to be chosen and set apart by the Church (so called and gathered) for the peculiar Administration of Ordinances, and Execution of Power, or Duty, which he intrusts them with, or calls them to, to be continued to the end of the World are (*p*) Bishops or Elders and Deacons.

(*p*) Act. 20:17; with Act. 20:28; Php. 1:1.

9. The way appointed by Christ for the Calling of any person, fitted, and gifted by the Holy Spirit, unto the Office of Bishop, or Elder, in a Church, is, that he be chosen thereunto by the common (*q*) suffrage of the Church it self; and Solemnly set apart by Fasting and Prayer, with imposition of hands of the (*r*) Eldership of the Church, if there be any before Constituted therein; And of a Deacon (*s*) that he be chosen by the like suffrage, and set apart by Prayer, and the like Imposition of hands.

(*q*) Act. 14:23: See the original. (*r*) 1Ti. 4:14. (*s*) Act. 6:3; Act. 6:5-6.

10. The work of Pastors being constantly to attend the Service of Christ, in his Churches, in the Ministry of the Word, and Prayer, (*t*) with watching for their Souls, as they that must give an account to him; it is incumbent on the Churches to whom they Minister, not only to give them all due respect, (*u*) but also to communicate to them of all their good things according to their ability, so as they may have a comfortable supply, without being themselves (*x*) entangled in Secular Affairs; and may also be capable of exercising (*y*) Hospitality toward others; and this is required by the (*z*) Law of Nature, and by the Express order of our Lord Jesus, who hath ordained that they that preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel.

(*t*) Act. 6:4; Heb. 13:17: (*u*) 1Ti. 5:17-18; Gal. 6:6-7. (*x*) 2Ti. 2:4. (*y*) 1Ti. 3:2. (*z*) 1Cor. 9:6-14.

11. Although it be incumbent on the Bishops or Pastors of the Churches to be instant in Preaching the Word, by way of Office; yet the work of Preaching the Word, is not so peculiarly confined to them; but that others also (*a*) gifted, and fitted by the Holy Spirit for it, and approved, and called by the Church, may and ought to perform it.

(*a*) Act. 11:19-21; 1Pe. 4:10-11.

12. As all Believers are bound to joyn themselves to particular Churches, when and where they have opportunity so to do; So all that are admitted unto the priviledges of a Church, are also (*b*) under the Censures and Government thereof, according to the Rule of Christ.

(*b*) 1Th. 5:14; 2Th. 3:6; 2Th. 3:14-15.

13. No Church-members upon any offence taken by them, having performed their Duty required of them towards the person they are offended at, ought to disturb any Church order, or absent themselves from the Assemblies of the Church, or Administration of any Ordinances, upon the account of such offence at any of their fellow-members; but to wait upon Christ, (*c*) in the further proceeding of the Church.

(*c*) Mat. 18:15-17; Eph. 2:1-3

14. As each Church, and all the Members of it are bound to (*d*) pray continually, for the good and prosperity of all the Churches of Christ, in all

places; and upon all occasions to further it (every one within the bounds of their places, and callings, in the Exercise of their Gifts and Graces) so the Churches (when planted by the providence of God so as they may enjoy opportunity and advantage for it) ought to hold *(e)* communion amongst themselves for their peace, increase of love, and mutual edification.

(d) Eph. 6:18; Psa. 122:6. *(e)* Rom. 16:1-2; 3Jn. 1:1-10.

15. In cases of difficulties or differences, either in point of Doctrine, or Administration; wherein either the Churches in general are concerned, or any one Church in their peace, union, and edification; or any member, or members, of any Church are injured, in or by any proceedings in censures not agreeable to truth, and order: it is according to the mind of Christ, that many Churches holding communion together, do by their messengers meet to consider, *(f)* and give their advice, in or about that matter in difference, to be reported to all the Churches concerned; howbeit these messengers assembled are not entrusted with any Church-power properly so called; or with any jurisdiction over the Churches themselves, to exercise any censures either over any Churches, or Persons: or *(g)* to impose their determination on the Churches, or Officers.

(f) Act. 15:2; Act. 15:4; Act. 15:6 & Act. 15:22-23; Act. 15:25. *(g)* 2Cor. 1:24; 1Jn. 4:1.

Chapter XXVIII

Of the Communion of Saints

1. All Saints that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by his Spirit, and Faith; although they are not made thereby one person with him, have *(a)* fellowship in his Graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory; and being united to one another in love, they *(b)* have communion in each others gifts, and graces; and are obliged to the performance of such duties, publick and private, in an orderly way, *(c)* as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.

(a) 1Jn. 1:3; Joh. 1:16; Php. 3:10; Rom. 6:5-6. *(b)* Eph. 4:15-16; 1Cor. 12:7; 1Cor. 3:21-23. *(c)* 1Th. 5:11; 1Th. 5:14; Rom. 1:12; 1Jn. 3:17-18; Gal. 6:10.

2. Saints by profession are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services, *(d)* as tend to their mutual edification; as also in relieving each other in *(e)* outward things according to their several abilities, and necessities; which communion according to the rule of the Gospel, though especially to be exercised by them, in the relations wherein they stand, whether in *(f)* families, or *(g)* Churches; yet as God offereth opportunity is to be extended to all the household of faith, even all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus; nevertheless their communion one with another as Saints, doth not take away or *(h)* infringe, the title or propriety, which each man hath in his goods and possessions.

(d) Heb. 10:24-25; with Heb. 3:12-13. *(e)* Act. 12:29-30. [It appears that the reference to Act. 12:29; Act. 12:30. in the original manuscript is an error (Act. 12:29; Act. 12:30. does not exist). Most modern editions cite Act. 11:29; Act. 11:30.] *(f)* Eph. 6:4. *(g)* 1Cor. 12:14-27. *(h)* Act. 5:4; Eph. 4:28.

Chapter XXIX

Of Baptism and the Lord's Supper

1. Baptism and the Lords Supper are ordinances of positive, and sovereign institution; appointed by the Lord Jesus the only Law-giver, to be continued in his Church *(a)* to the end of the world.

(a) Mat. 28:19-20; 1Cor. 11:26.

2. These holy appointments are to be administred by those only, who are qualified and thereunto called according *(b)* to the commission of Christ.

(b) Mat. 28:19; 1Cor. 4:1.

Chapter XXX

Of Baptism

1. Baptism is an Ordinance of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, to be unto the party Baptized, a sign of his fellowship with him, in his death, (*c*) and resurrection; of his being engrafted into him; of (*d*) remission of sins; and of his (*e*) giving up unto God through Jesus Christ to live and walk in newness of Life.

(*c*) Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12; Gal. 3:27. (*d*) Mar. 1.4; Act. 26.16. [It appears that the reference to Act. 26:16 in the original manuscript is an error. Most modern editions have Act. 22:16 which seems more relevant.] (*e*) Rom. 6:2; Rom. 6:4.

2. Those who do actually professe (*f*) repentance towards God, faith in, and obedience, to our Lord Jesus, are the only proper subjects of this ordinance.

(*f*) Mar. 16:16; Act. 8:36-37.

3. The outward element to be used in this ordinance (*g*) is water, wherein the party is to be baptized, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

(*g*) Mat. 28:19-20; with Act. 8:38.

4. Immersion, or dipping of the person (*h*) in water, is necessary to the due administration of this ordinance.

(*h*) Mat. 3:16; Joh. 3:23.

Chapter XXXI

Of the Laying On Of Hands

1. We believe that laying on of hands, with prayer, upon baptised believers, as such, is an ordinance of Christ, *(a)* and ought to be submitted unto by all such persons that are admitted to partake of the Lord's Supper, and that the end of this ordinance is not for the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, but for a farther reception of the Holy Spirit of promise, *(b)* or for the addition of the graces of the Spirit, and the influences thereof; to confirm, strengthen, and comfort them in Christ Jesus, it being ratified and established by the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit in the primitive times, *(c)* to abide in the church as meeting together on the first day of the week was, *(d)* that being the day of worship, or christian sabbath, under the Gospel, and as preaching the word was, *(e)* and as baptism was, *(f)* and prayer was, *(g)* and singing psalms, etc. was, *(h)* so this laying on of hands was, *(i)* for as the whole Gospel was confirmed by signs and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost in general, *(k)* so was every ordinance in like manner confirmed in particular.

(a) Heb. 5:12; Heb. 6:1-2; Act. 8:17-18; Act. 19:6. *(b)* Eph. 1:13-14.

(c) Act. 18:7; Act. 19:6. *(d)* Act. 2:1. *(e)* Act. 10:44. *(f)* Mat. 3:16.

(g) Act. 4:31. *(h)* Act. 16:25-26. *(i)* Acts 8 & 19. *(k)* Heb. 2:3-4.

Chapter XXXII

Of the Lord's Supper

1. The Supper of the Lord Jesus, was instituted by him, the same night wherein he was betrayed, to be observed in his Churches unto the end of the world, for the perpetual remembrance, and shewing forth the sacrifice of himself in his death *(a)* confirmation of the faith of believers in all the benefits thereof, their spiritual nourishment, and growth in him, their further ingagement in, and to, all duties which they owe unto him; *(b)* and to be a bond and pledge of their communion with him, and with each other.

(a) 1Cor. 11:23-26. *(b)* 1Cor. 10:16-17; 1Cor. 10:21.

2. In this ordinance Christ is not offered up to his Father, nor any real sacrifice made at all, for remission of sin of the quick or dead; but only a memorial of that *(c)* one offering up of himself, by himself, upon the crosse, once for all; and a spiritual oblation of all *(d)* possible praise unto God for the same; so that the Popish sacrifice of the Mass (as they call it) is most abominable, injurious to Christs own only sacrifice, the alone propitiation for all the sins of the Elect.

(c) Heb. 9:25-26; Heb. 9:28. *(d)* 1Cor. 11:24; Mat. 26:26-27.

3. The Lord Jesus hath in this Ordinance, appointed his Ministers to Pray, and bless the Elements of Bread and Wine, and thereby to set them apart from a common to an holy use, and to take and break the Bread; to take the Cup, *(e)* and (they communicating also themselves) to give both to the Communicants.

(e) 1Cor. 11:23-26, &c.

4. The denial of the Cup to the people, worshiping the Elements, the lifting them up, or carrying them about for adoration, and reserving them for any pretended religious use, *(f)* are all contrary to the nature of this Ordinance, and to the institution of Christ.

(f) Mat. 26:26-28; Mat. 15:9; Exo. 20:4-5.

5. The outward Elements in this Ordinance, duely set apart to the uses ordained by Christ, have such relation to him crucified, as that truly, although in terms used figuratively, they are sometimes called by the name of the things they represent, to wit the *(g)* body and Blood of Christ; albeit in

substance, and nature, they still remain truly, and only (*h*) Bread, and Wine, as they were before.

(*g*) 1Cor. 11:27. (*h*) 1Cor. 11:26. & 1Cor. 11:28.

6. That doctrine which maintains a change of the substance of Bread and Wine, into the substance of Christs body and blood (commonly called Transubstantiation) by consecration of a Priest, or by any other way, is repugnant not to Scripture (*i*) alone, but even to common sense and reason; overthroweth the (*k*) nature of the ordinance, and hath been and is the cause of manifold superstitions, yea, of gross Idolatries.

(*i*) Act. 3:21; Luk. 24:6. & Luk. 24:39. (*k*) 1Cor. 11:24-25.

7. Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible Elements in this Ordinance, do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally, and corporally, but spiritually receive, and feed upon Christ crucified (*l*) & all the benefits of his death: the Body and Blood of Christ, being then not corporally, or carnally, but spiritually present to the faith of Believers, in that Ordinance, as the Elements themselves are to their outward senses.

(*l*) 1Cor. 10:16; 1Cor. 11:23-26.

8. All ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion (*m*) with Christ; so are they unworthy of the Lords Table; and cannot without great sin against him, while they remain such, partake of these holy mysteries, (*n*) or be admitted thereunto: yea whosoever shall receive unworthily are guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord, eating and drinking judgement to themselves.

(*m*) 2Cor. 6:14-15. (*n*) 1Cor. 11:29; Mat. 7:6.

Chapter XXXIII

Of the State of Man after Death and of the Resurrection of the Dead

1. The Bodies of Men after Death return to dust, *(a)* and see corruption; but their Souls (which neither die nor sleep) having an immortal subsistence, immediately *(b)* return to God who gave them: the Souls of the Righteous being then made perfect in holyness, are received into paradise where they are with Christ, and behold the face of God, in light *(c)* and glory; waiting for the full Redemption of their Bodies; and the souls of the wicked, are cast into hell; where they remain in torment and utter darkness, reserved to *(d)* the judgement of the great day; besides these two places for Souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.

(a) Gen. 3:19; Act. 13:36. *(b)* Ecc. 12:7. *(c)* Luk. 23:43; 2Cor. 5:1; 2Cor. 5:6; 2Cor. 5:8; Php. 1:23; Heb. 12:23. *(d)* Jud. 1:6-7; 1Pe. 3:19; Luk. 16:23-24.

2. At the last day such of the Saints as are found alive shall not sleep but be *(e)* changed; and all the dead shall be raised up with the self same bodies, and *(f)* none other; although with different *(g)* qualities, which shall be united again to their Souls for ever.

(e) 1Cor. 15:51; 1Cor. 15:52; 1Th. 4:17. *(f)* Job. 19:26-27. *(g)* 1Cor. 15:42-43.

3. The bodies of the unjust shall by the power of Christ, be raised to dishonour; the bodies of the just by his spirit unto honour, *(h)* and be made conformable to his own glorious Body.

(h) Act. 24:15; Joh. 5:28-29; Php. 3:21

Chapter XXXIV

Of the Last Judgement

1. God hath appointed a Day wherein he will judge the world in Righteousness, by *(a)* Jesus Christ; to whom all power and judgement is given of the Father; in which Day not only the *(b)* Apostate Angels shall be judged; but likewise all persons that have lived upon the Earth, shall appear before the Tribunal of Christ; *(c)* to give an account of their Thoughts, Words, and Deeds, and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil.

(a) Act. 17:31; Joh. 5:22; Joh. 5:27. *(b)* 1Cor. 6:3; Jud. 1:6. *(c)* 2Cor. 5:10; Ecc. 12:14; Mat. 12:36; Rom. 14:10; Rom. 14:12; Mat. 25:32. &c.

2. The end of Gods appointing this Day, is for the manifestation of the glory of his Mercy, in the Eternal Salvation of the Elect; *(d)* and of his Justice in the Eternal damnation of the Reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient; for then shall the Righteous go into Everlasting Life, and receive that fulness of Joy, and Glory, with everlasting reward, in the presence *(e)* of the Lord: but the wicked who know not God, and obey not the Gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into Eternal torments, and *(f)* punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

(d) Rom. 9:22-23. *(e)* Mat. 25:21; Mat. 25:34; 2Ti. 4:8. *(f)* Mat. 25:46; Mar. 9:48; 2Th. 1:7-10.

3. As Christ would have us to be certainly perswaded that there shall be a Day of judgement, both *(g)* to deter all men from sin, and for the greater *(h)* consolation of the godly, in their adversity; so will he have that day unknown to Men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be always watchful, because they know not at what hour, the *(i)* Lord will come; and may ever be prepared to say, *(k)* Come Lord Jesus, Come quickly, Amen.

(g) 2Cor. 5:10-11. *(h)* 2Th. 1:5-7. *(i)* Mar. 13:35-37; Luk. 13:35, 36. [It appears that the reference to Luk. 13:35, Luk. 13:36 in the original manuscript is an error (Luk. 13:36 does not exist). Most modern editions have Luk. 12:35-40.] *(k)* Rev. 22:20.

An Appendix

Whosoever reads, and impartially considers what we have in our forgoing confession declared, may readily perceive, That we do not only concenter with all other true Christians on the Word of God (revealed in the Scriptures of truth) as the foundation and rule of our faith and worship. But that we have also industriously endeavoured to manifest, That in the fundamental Articles of Christianity we mind the same things, and have therefore expressed our belief in the same words, that have on the like occasion been spoken by other societies of Christians before us.

This we have done, That those who are desirous to know the principles of Religion which we hold and practise, may take an estimate from our selves (who jointly concur in this work) and may not be misguided, either by undue reports; or by the ignorance or errors of particular persons, who going under the same name with our selves, may give an occasion of scandalizing the truth we profess.

And although we do differ from our brethren who are Paedobaptists; in the subject and administration of Baptisme, and such other circumstances as have a necessary dependence on our observance of that Ordinance, and do frequent our own assemblies for our mutual edification, and discharge of those duties, and services which we owe unto God, and in his fear to each other: yet we would not be from hence misconstrued, as if the discharge of our own consciences herein, did any wayes disoblige or alienate our affections, or conversation from any others that fear the Lord; but that we may and do as we have opportunity participate of the labors of those, whom God hath indued with abilities above our selves, and qualified, and called to the Ministry of the Word, earnestly desiring to approve our selves to be such, as follow after peace with holyness, and therefore we alwaies keep that blessed Irenicum, or healing Word of the Apostle before our eyes; if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you; nevertheless whereto we have already attained; let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing, Php. 3:15-16.

Let it not therefore be judged of us (because much hath been written on this subject, and yet we continue this our practise different from others) that it is out of obstinacy, but rather as the truth is, that we do herein according to the best of our understandings worship God, out of a pure mind yielding

obedience to his precept, in that method which we take to be most agreeable to the Scriptures of truth, and primitive practise.

It would not become us to give any such intimation, as should carry a semblance that what we do in the service of God is with a doubting conscience, or with any such temper of mind that we do thus for the present, with a reservation that we will do otherwise hereafter upon more mature deliberation; nor have we any cause so to do, being fully perswaded, that what we do is agreeable to the will of God. Yet we do heartily propose this, that if any of the Servants of our Lord Jesus shall, in the Spirit of meekness, attempt to convince us of any mistake either in judgement or practise, we shall diligently ponder his arguments; and accompt him our chiefest friend that shall be an instrument to convert us from any error that is in our ways, for we cannot wittingly do any thing against the truth, but all things for the truth.

And therefore we have indeavoured seriously to consider, what hath been already offered for our satisfaction in this point; and are loth to say any more lest we should be esteemed desirous of renewed contests thereabout: yet forasmuch as it may justly be expected that we shew some reason, why we cannot acquiesce in what hath been urged against us; we shall with as much brevity as may consist with plainness, endeavour to satisfie the expectation of those that shall peruse what we now publish in this matter also.

1. As to those Christians who consent with us, That Repentance from dead works, and Faith towards God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, is required in persons to be Baptized; and do therefore supply the defect of the (infant being incapable of making confession of either) by others who do undertake these things for it. Although we do find by Church history that this hath been a very antient practise; yet considering, that the same Scripture which does caution us against censuring our brother, with whom we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, does also instruct us, That every one of us shall give an accompt of himself to God, and whatsoever is not of Faith is Sin. Rom. 14:4, Rom. 14:10, Rom. 14:12, Rom. 14:23. Therefore we cannot for our own parts be perswaded in our own minds, to build such a practise as this, upon an unwritten tradition: But do rather choose in all points of Faith and Worship, to have recourse to the holy Scriptures, for the information of our judgment, and regulation of our practise; being well assured that a

conscientious attending thereto, is the best way to prevent, and rectifie our defects and errors. 2Tim. 3. 16,17. And if any such case happen to be debated between Christians, which is not plainly determinable by the Scriptures, we think it safest to leave such things undecided until the second coming of our Lord Jesus; as they did in the Church of old, until there should arise a Priest with Urim and Thummim, that might certainly inform them of the mind of God thereabout, Ezr. 2:62-63.

2. As for those our Christian brethren who do ground their arguments for Infants baptism, upon a presumed faederal Holiness, or Church-Membership, we conceive they are deficient in this, that albeit this Covenant-Holiness and Membership should be as is supposed, in reference unto the Infants of Believers; yet no command for Infant baptism does immediately and directly result from such a quality, or relation.

All instituted Worship receives its sanction from the precept, and is to be thereby governed in all the necessary circumstances thereof.

So it was in the Covenant that God made with Abraham and his Seed. The sign whereof was appropriated only to the Male, notwithstanding that the female seed as well as the Male were comprehended in the Covenant and part of the Church of God; neither was this sign to be affixed to any Male Infant till he was eight dayes old, albeit he was within the Covenant from the first moment of his life; nor could the danger of death, or any other supposed necessity, warrant the circumcising of him before the set time, nor was there any cause for it; the commination of being cut off from his people, being only upon the neglect, or contempt of the precept.

Righteous Lot was nearly related to Abraham in the flesh, and contemporary with him, when this Covenant was made; yet inasmuch as he did not descend from his loynes, nor was of his houshold family (although he was of the same houshold of faith with Abraham) yet neither Lot himself nor any of his posterity (because of their descent from him) were signed with the signature of this Covenant that was made with Abraham and his seed.

This may suffice to shew, that where there was both an expresse Covenant, and a sign thereof (such a Covenant as did separate the persons with whom it was made, and all their off-spring from all the rest of the world, as a people holy unto the Lord, and did constitute them the visible Church of God, (though not comprehensive of all the faithful in the world) yet the sign of this

Covenant was not affixed to all the persons that were within this Covenant, nor to any of them till the prefixt season; nor to other faithful servants of God, that were not of descent from Abraham. And consequently that it depends purely upon the will of the Law-giver, to determine what shall be the sign of his Covenant, unto whom, at what season, and upon what terms, it shall be affixed.

If our brethren do suppose baptism to be the seal of the Covenant which God makes with every beleiver (of which the Scriptures are altogether silent) it is not our concern to contend with them herein; yet we conceive the seal of that Covenant is the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ in the particular and individual persons in whom he resides, and nothing else, neither do they or we suppose that baptism is in any such manner substituted in the place of circumcision, as to have the same (and no other) latitude, extent, or terms, then circumcision had; for that was suited only for the Male children, baptism is an ordinance suited for every beleiver, whether male, or female. That extended to all the males that were born in Abrahams house, or bought with his money, equally with the males that proceeded from his own loynes; but baptisme is not so far extended in any true Christian Church that we know of, as to be administred to all the poor infidel servants, that the members thereof purchase for their service, and introduce into their families; nor to the children born of them in their house.

But we conceive the same parity of reasoning may hold for the ordinance of baptism as for that of circumcision; Exo. 12:49. viz. one law for the stranger, as for the home born: If any desire to be admitted to all the ordinances, and priviledges of Gods house, the door is open; upon the same terms that any one person was ever admitted to all, or any of those priviledges, that belong to the Christian Church; may all persons of right challenge the like admission.

As for that text of Scripture, Rom. 4:11. He received circumcision a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised; we conceive if the Apostles scope in that place be duly attended to, it will appear that no argument can be taken from thence to inforce Infant baptism; and forasmuch as we find a full and fair account of those words given by the learned Dr. Lighfoot (a man not to be suspected of partiality in this controversie) in his *Hor. Hebrai*, on the 1Cor. 7:19. p.42, 43. we shall

transcribe his words at large, without any comment of our own upon them.

Circumcision is nothing, if we respect the time, for now it was without use, that end of it being especially fulfilled; for which it had been instituted: this end the Apostle declares in these words, Rom. 4:11. But I fear that by most translations they are not sufficiently suited to the end of circumcision, and the scope of the Apostle whilst something of their own is by them inserted.

And after the Doctor hath represented diverse versions of the words agreeing for the most part in sense with that which we have in our Bibles he thus proceeds.

Other versions are to the same purpose; as if circumcision was given to Abraham for a Seal of that Righteousness which he had being yet uncircumcised, which we will not deny to be in some sense true, but we believe that circumcision had chiefly a far different respect.

Give me leave thus to render the words; And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the Righteousness of Faith, which was to be in the uncircumcision, Which was to be (I say) not which had been, not that which Abraham had whilst he was yet uncircumcised; but that which his uncircumcised seed should have, that is the Gentiles, who in time to come should imitate the faith of Abraham.

Now consider well on what occasion circumcision was instituted unto Abraham, setting before thine eyes the history thereof, Gen. 17.

This promise is first made unto him, Thou shalt be the Father of many Nations (in what sense the Apostle explaineth in that chapter) and then there is subjoined a double seal for the confirmation of the thing, to wit, the change of the name Abram into Abraham, and the institution of circumcision. v4. Behold as for me, my Covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be the Father of many Nations. Wherefore was his name called Abraham? for the sealing of this promise. Thou shalt be the Father of many Nations. And wherefore was circumcision instituted to him? For the sealing of the same promise. Thou shalt be the Father of many Nations. So that this is the sense of the Apostle; most agreeable to the institution of circumcision; he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the Righteousness of Faith which in time to come the uncircumcision (or the Gentiles) should have and obtain.

Abraham had a twofold seed, natural, of the Jews; and faithful, of the

believing Gentiles: his natural seed was signed with the sign of circumcision, first indeed for the distinguishing of them from all other Nations whilst they as yet were not the seed of Abraham, but especially for the memorial of the justification of the Gentiles by faith, when at length they should become his seed. Therefore circumcision was of right to cease, when the Gentiles were brought in to the faith, forasmuch as then it had obtained its last and chief end, & thenceforth circumcision is nothing.

Thus far he, which we earnestly desire may be seriously weighed, for we plead not his authority, but the evidence of truth in his words.

3. Of whatsoever nature the holiness of the children mentioned, 1Cor. 7:12. be, yet they who do conclude that all such children (whether Infants or of riper years) have from hence an immediate right to baptism, do as we conceive put more into the conclusion, then will be found in the premisses.

For although we do not determine positively concerning the Apostles scope in the holiness here mentioned, so as to say it is this, or that, and no other thing; Yet it is evident that the Apostle does by it determine not only the lawfulness but the expedience also of a believers cohabitation with an unbeliever, in the state of marriage.

And we do think that although the Apostles asserting of the unbelieving yokefellow to be sanctified by the believer, should carry in it somewhat more then is in the bare marriage of two infidels, because although the marriage covenant have a divine sanction so as to make the wedlock of two unbelievers a lawful action, and their conjunction and cohabitation in that respect undefiled, yet there might be no ground to suppose from thence, that both or either of their persons are thereby sanctified; and the Apostle urges the cohabitation of a believer with an infidel in the state of wedlock from this ground that the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife; nevertheless here you have the influence of a believers faith ascending from an inferior to a superior relation; from the wife to the husband who is her head, before it can descend to their off-spring. And therefore we say, whatever be the nature or extent of the holiness here intended, we conceive it cannot convey to the children an immediate right to baptism; because it would then be of another nature, and of a larger extent, then the root, and original from whence it is derived, for it is clear by the Apostles argument that holiness cannot be derived to the child from the sanctity of one parent

only, if either father or mother be (in the sense intended by the Apostle) unholy or unclean, so will the child be also, therefore for the production of an holy seed it is necessary that both the Parents be sanctified; and this the Apostle positively asserts in the first place to be done by the beleiving parent, although the other be an unbeliever; and then consequentially from thence argues, the holiness of their children. Hence it follows, that as the children have no other holiness then what they derive from both their Parents; so neither can they have any right by this holiness to any spiritual priviledge but such as both their Parents did also partake of: and therefore if the unbelieving Parent (though sanctified by the believing Parent) have not thereby a right to baptism, neither can we concieve, that there is any such priviledge, derived to the children by their birth-holiness.

Besides if it had been the usual practice in the Apostles dayes for the father or mother that did beleive, to bring all their children with them to be baptised; then the holiness of the beleiving Corinthians children, would not at all have been in question when this Epistle was written; but might have been argued from their passing under that ordinance, which represented their new birth, although they had derived no holiness from their Parents, by their first birth; and would have layen as an exception against the Apostles inference, else were your Children unclean, &c. But of the sanctification of all the children of every beleiver by this ordinance, or any other way, then what is before-mentioned, the Scripture is altogether silent.

This may also be added; that if this birth holiness do qualifie all the children of every believer, for the ordinance of baptism; why not for all other ordinances? for the Lords Supper as was practiced for a long time together? for if recourse be had to what the Scriptures speak generally of this subject; it will be found, that the same qualities which do intitle any person to baptism, do so also for the participation of all the Ordinances, and priviledges of the house of God, that are common to all believers.

Whosoever can and does interrogate his good Conscience towards God when he is baptised (as every one must do that makes it to himself a sign of Salvation) is capable of doing the same thing, in every other act of worship that he performs.

4. The arguments and inferences that are usually brought for, or against Infant baptism from those few instances which the Scriptures afford us of whole

families being baptised; are only conjectural; and therefore cannot of themselves, be conclusive on either hand: yet in regard most that treat on this subject for Infant baptism, do (as they conceive) improve these instances to the advantage of their argument: we think it meet (in like manner as in the cases before mentioned so in this) to shew the invalidity of such inferences.

Cornelius worshipped God with all his house, the Jaylor, and Crispus the chief ruler of the Synagogue, believed God with each of their houses. The houshold of Stephanus addicted themselves to the Ministry of the Saints: so that thus far Worshipping, and Believing runs parallel with Baptism. And if Lydia, had been a married person, when she believed, it is probable her husband would also have been named by the Apostle, as in like cases, inasmuch as he would have been not only a part, but the head of that baptised houshold.

Who can assign any probable reason, why the Apostle should make mention of four or five housholds being baptised and no more? or why he does so often vary in the method of his salutations, Rom. 1:6. sometimes mentioning only particular persons of great note, other times such, and the Church in their house? the Saints that were with them; and them belonging to Narcissus, who were in the Lord; thus saluting either whole families, or part of families, or only particular persons in families, considered as they were in the Lord, for if it had been an usual practise to baptize all children, with their parents; there were then many thousands of the Jews which believed, and a great number of the Gentiles, in most of the principle Cities in the World, and among so many thousands, it is more then probable there would have been some thousands of housholds baptised; why then should the Apostle in this respect signalize one family of the Jews and three or four of the Gentiles, as particular instances in a case that was common? whoever supposes that we do willfully debar our children, from the benefit of any promise, or priviledge, that of right belongs to the children of believing parents; they do entertain over severe thoughts of us: to be without natural affections is one of the characters of the worst of persons; in the worst of times. Wee do freely confesse our selves guilty before the Lord, in that we have not with more circumspection and diligence train'd up those that relate to us in the fear of the Lord; and do humbly and earnestly pray, that our omissions herein may be remitted, and that they may not redound to the prejudice of our selves, or any of ours: but with respect to that duty that is incumbent on us, we

acknowledge our selves obliged by the precepts of God, to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, to teach them his fear, both by instruction and example; and should we set light by this precept, it would demonstrate that we are more vile then the unnatural Heathen, that like not to retain God in their knowledge, our baptism might then be justly accompted, as no baptism to us.

There are many special promises that do incourage us as well as precepts, that do oblige us to the close pursuit of our duty herein: that God whom we serve, being jealous of his Worship, threatens the visiting of the Fathers transgression upon the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate him: yet does more abundantly extend his mercy, even to thousands (respecting the offspring and succeeding generations) of them that love him, and keep his commands.

When our Lord rebuked his disciples for prohibiting the access of little children that were brought to him, that he might pray over them, lay his hands upon them, and blesse them, does declare, that of such is the Kingdom of God. And the Apostle Peter in answer to their enquiry, that desired to know what they must do to be saved, does not only instruct them in the necessary duty of repentance and baptism; but does also thereto encourage them, by that promise which had reference both to them, and their children; if our Lord Jesus in the forementioned place, do not respect the qualities of children (as elsewhere) as to their meekness, humility, and sincerity, and the like; but intend also that those very persons and such like, appertain to the Kingdom of God, and if the Apostle Peter in mentioning the aforesaid promise, do respect not only the present and succeeding generations of those Jews, that heard him, (in which sense the same phrase doth occurre in Scripture) but also the immediate offspring of his auditors; whether the promise relate to the gift of the Holy Spirit, or of eternal life, or any grace, or priviledge tending to the obtaining thereof; it is neither our concerne nor our interest to confine the mercies, and promises of God, to a more narrow, or lesse compasse then he is pleased graciously to offer and intend them; nor to have a light esteem of them; but are obliged in duty to God, and affection to our children; to plead earnestly with God and use our utmost endeavours that both our selves, and our off-spring may be partakers of his Mercies and gracious Promises: yet we cannot from either of these texts collect a sufficient warrant for us to baptize our children before they are instructed in the principles of the Christian

Religion.

For as to the instance in little children, it seems by the disciples forbidding them, that they were brought upon some other account, not so frequent as Baptism must be supposed to have been, if from the beginning believers children had been admitted thereto: and no account is given whether their parents were baptised believers or not; and as to the instance of the Apostle; if the following words and practice, may be taken as an interpretation of the scope of that promise we cannot conceive it does refer to infant baptism, because the text does presently subjoyn; Then they that gladly received the word were baptised.

That there were some believing children of believing parents in the Apostles dayes is evident from the Scriptures, even such as were then in their fathers family, and under their parents tuition, and education; to whom the Apostle in several of his Epistles to the Churches, giveth commands to obey their parents in the Lord; and does allure their tender years to hearken to this precept, by reminding them that it is the first command with promise.

And it is recorded by him for the praise of Timothy, and encouragement of parents betimes to instruct, and children early to attend to godly instruction, that from a child, he had known the holy Scriptures.

The Apostle John rejoyced greatly when he found of the children of the Elect Lady walking in the truth; and the children of her Elect Sister joyn with the Apostle in his salutation.

But that this was not generally so, that all the children of believers were accounted for believers (as they would have been if they had been all baptised) may be collected from the character which the Apostle gives of persons fit to be chosen to Eldership in the Church which was not common to all believers; among others this is expressly one, viz. If there be any having believing, or faithful children, not accused of Riot or unruly; and we may from the Apostles writings on the same subject collect the reason of this qualification, viz. That in case the person designed for this office to teach and rule in the house of God, had children capable of it; there might be first a proof of his ability, industry, and successe in this work in his own family; and private capacity, before he was ordained to the exercise of this authority in the Church, in a publick capacity, as a Bishop in the house of God.

These things we have mentioned as having a direct reference unto the

controversie between our brethren and us; other things that are more abstruse and prolix, which are frequently introduced into this controversie, but do not necessarily concern it, we have purposely avoided; that the distance between us and our brethren may not be by us made more wide; for it is our duty, and concern so far as is possible for us (retaining a good conscience towards God) to seek a more entire agreement and reconciliation with them.

We are not insensible that as to the order of Gods house, and entire communion therein there are some things wherein we (as well as others) are not at a full accord among our selves, as for instance; the known principle, and state of the consciences of diverse of us, that have agreed in this Confession is such; that we cannot hold Church-communion, with any other then Baptized-believers, and Churches constituted of such; yet some others of us have a greater liberty and freedom in our spirits that way; and therefore we have purposely omitted the mention of things of that nature, that we might concur, in giving this evidence of our agreement, both among our selves, and with other good Christians, in those important articles of the Christian Religion, mainly insisted on by us: and this notwithstanding we all esteem it our chief concern, both among our selves, and all others that in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours, and love him in sincerity, to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace; and in order thereunto, to exercise all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.

And we are perswaded if the same method were introduced into frequent practice between us and our Christian friends who agree with us in all the fundamental articles of the Christian faith (though they do not so in the subject and administration of baptism) it would soon beget a better understanding, and brotherly affection between us.

In the beginning of the Christian Church, when the doctrine of the baptism of Christ was not universally understood, yet those that knew only the baptism of John, were the Disciples of the Lord Jesus; and Apollos an eminent Minister of the Gospel of Jesus.

In the beginning of the reformation of the Christian Church, and recovery from that Egyptian darkness wherein our forefathers for many generations were held in bondage; upon recourse had to the Scriptures of truth, different apprehensions were conceived, which are to this time continued, concerning

the practise of this Ordinance.

Let not our zeal herein be misinterpreted: that God whom we serve is jealous of his worship. By his gracious providence the Law thereof, is continued amongst us; and we are forewarned by what hapned in the Church of the Jews, that it is necessary for every generation, and that frequently in every generation to consult the divine oracle, compare our worship with the rule, and take heed to what doctrines we receive and practise.

If the ten commands exhibited in the popish Idolatrous service books had been received as the entire law of God, because they agree in number with his ten commands, and also in the substance of nine of them; the second Commandment forbidding Idolatry had been utterly lost.

If Ezra and Nehemiah had not made a diligent search into the particular parts of Gods law, and his worship; the Feast of Tabernacles (which for many centuries of years, had not been duly observed, according to the institution, though it was retained in the general notion) would not have been kept in due order.

So may it be now as to many things relating to the service of God, which do retain the names proper to them in their first institution, but yet through inadvertency (where there is no sinister design) may vary in their circumstances, from their first institution. And if by means of any antient defection, or of that general corruption of the service of God, and interruption of his true worship, and persecution of his servants by the Antichristian Bishop of Rome, for many generations; those who do consult the Word of God, cannot yet arrive at a full and mutual satisfaction among themselves, what was the practise of the primitive Christian Church, in some points relating to the Worship of God: yet inasmuch as these things are not of the essence of Christianity, but that we agree in the fundamental doctrines thereof, we do apprehend, there is sufficient ground to lay aside all bitterness and prejudice, and in the spirit of love and meekness to imbrace and own each other therein; leaving each other at liberty to perform such other services, (wherein we cannot concur) apart unto God, according to the best of our understanding.